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*The romance of  
my childhood and youth*

Juliette Adam



AN  
(Adm. B)  
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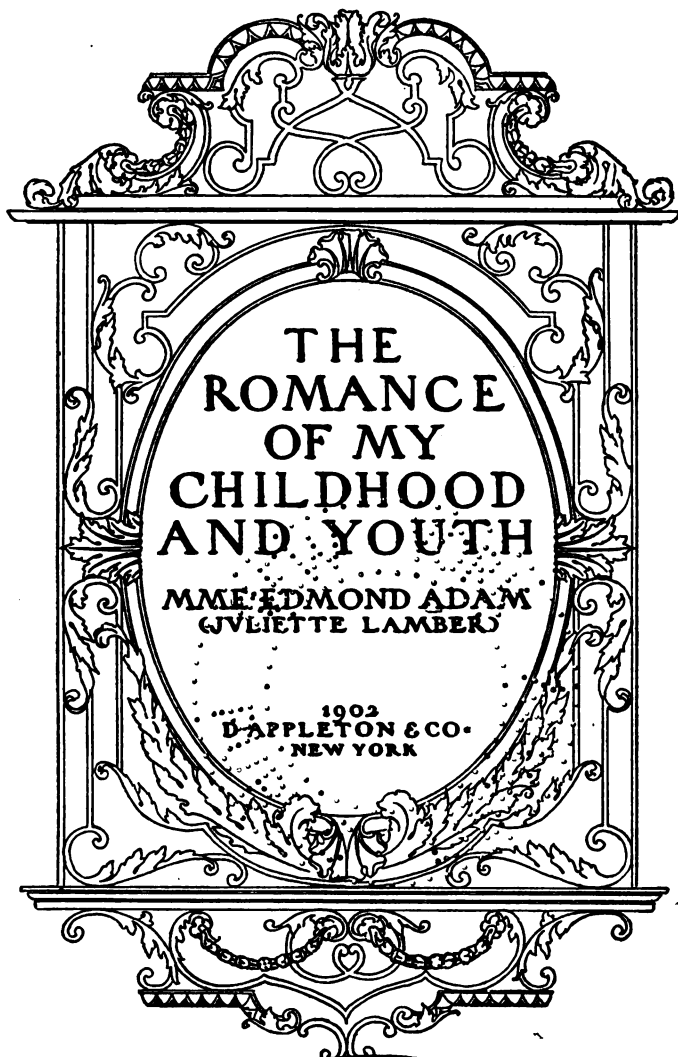




**THE ROMANCE OF MY  
CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH**



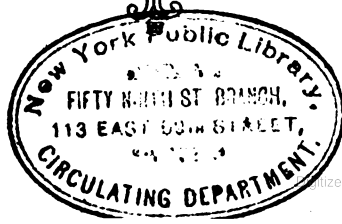
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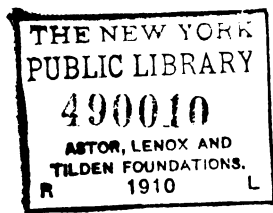
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JULIETTE LAMBERG

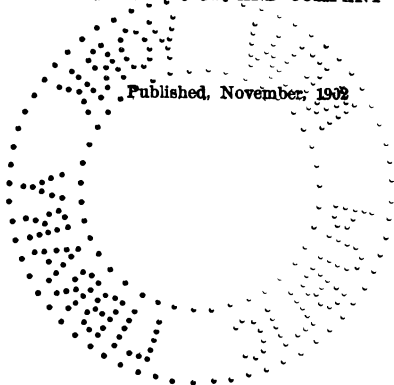
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## PREFACE

**A**T the present time, the interest which a writer's work may have lies greatly in the study of those first impulses which gave it birth, of the surroundings amid which it was elaborated, and of the connection between the end pursued and the achievement.

In former times a writer's personality was of small importance. His works were deemed sufficient. The duality presented by a study of the causes of production, and the production itself, was a matter of interest only to a small minority of readers.

By degrees, however, with the writer's own consent, indiscreet glances were thrown into the personal lives of those whose mission it was to direct, enlighten, or amuse the lives of other people.

Forty or fifty years ago the public first read the book, and judged a writer by his writings, and then would often base their judgments on the opinion of some great critic, who had slowly given proof of his knowledge, and whose ideas were found worthy of adoption.

To-day it is quite the contrary. A new book

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is so generally and indiscreetly announced that the larger portion of the public is quite aware both of the book and of the process of its production. A number of small reviews of the volume are read; they often are, in fact, just so many interviews with the author, and, under the general impression thus imparted, the book is read—a great favour for the writer are such notices, for people might speak of a book and criticise it in that way without ever having read it.

General curiosity is insatiable with regard to the small details concerning the habits and customs of an author if he is already celebrated, or is likely to achieve success.

But, on the other hand, if the present custom weakens to an infinite degree the elements of personal appreciation of any work, it adds to knowledge of the author's portrait, which stands out from all these inquiries and indiscretions, with traits of physiognomy that possess, perhaps, more lively interest.

We must obviously submit to the custom, and ask ourselves whether, by means of much observation of both the author and his work, we may not obtain a broader and more enlightened criticism, uniting the author's intentions with the result achieved by his book.

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Or else is it because, overworked as we are, we have perhaps become unable to enjoy the delight of reading a book for itself, containing, by chance, no anecdotes which please us—nothing, in fact, outside the actual interest of the book itself, but forming part of it; or is it that we have no longer any time for profound or matured reflection, or judgments expressed in axioms, the terms of which have long been weighed in the balance of thought?

It requires time to discover the master thought of any work of real worth, in order to disclose its high morality, its art tendencies.

The maddening rule of our new mode of life being the desire to know all things as quickly as possible, we ask the author, whose motives are known beforehand, what he meant to say, or do, or prove, and in this way we think to gain time and not run the risk of "idle dreaming."

Ah! as to dreams, shall we speak of them?—golden money, no longer current, which we scatter behind us in our haste to pursue what others are pursuing. If, by chance, we find it again, how soiled by the road's dust it seems!

The asking of a question or two, and even the explanation of a phenomenon which is often as clear as day, can be undertaken as we hurry along, but simply to examine the "whys and wherefores"



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*of things, or to attempt to discover the laws of facts, and group them methodically, giving the logical relation of these laws in general origins—verily, only a few vulgar slang words can express the impression made on the minds of those who wish to be considered “modern men,” with respect to these very problems of which we, of the elder generation, are so fond, and which are called by the moderns—“stuff.”*

*“In writing your memoirs you encourage what you appear to condemn,” people will doubtless say to me. But I condemn nothing. I simply note a state of mind and ways of life. I feel sure that if in “my time” an author’s work held the first place, and that if nowadays the author himself excites disproportionate interest, the future will establish an equilibrium between these two extremes.*

*If the candles of literary people of the present time are burned at both ends, it is, perhaps, because there remain few embers of the luminous torches of the past. The authors of the future will be obliged to renew their provision of wood, which must burn itself out, normally, in the middle.*

*However this may be, it is, perhaps, profitable to register the facts in a fleeting epoch for the use of those who are running in pursuit of an epoch which is to take its place.*

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*Old people are fond of describing what took place in former times, and they have a real mission so to do if only they will refrain from trying to enforce upon us the superiority of the teaching of that which has disappeared, and if they will tell their story simply, leaving a younger generation to discover its lesson, and from it form conclusions.*

*Those of the older generation who educated us thought sentimentalism and humanity, which appeared at first brutally, and then were gloriously driven back by the Terror and the Empire, had returned again triumphantly.*

*Moreover, the Revolution and Bonaparte had opened our gates to a foreign influx. Our fathers gave shelter to every Utopian idea brought from Italy, Germany, Austria, and Russia. The mixture was so confusing that all manner of extravagant things sprang from it.*

*The consciences of the "men of progress" were concentrated around the social conception of the "suffering classes," and the political conception involved in the crimes of the "higher classes." Love and indignation were the food with which they fed our youthful hearts.*

*The Bible, the socialism of Christ, and examples of sublimity of character taken from Greece and Rome, became the strange mixture that was the*

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*guiding spirit of our fathers' action, and inspired our primal ideas.*

*People of reason, who possessed solid common-sense, the Bourgeois, were, naturally, to a much overrated degree, our enemies.*

*We are, in all our primal impulses, the children of the men of 1848; our very reaction was born of their action.*

*We have been led on solely by their example; haunted, just as they were, by the feeling that we should add to our unlimited dreams what they had deemed to be the counterpoise to the great love of humanity, namely, science; but a science which we thought was to bring relief to the worker, by machinery, a cheaper rate of living to the poor, and a more equal distribution of wealth to the unfortunate.*

*"The rights of man," that oft-repeated phrase which has never been rightly understood by those who called themselves its defenders, possessed for them, before, during, and after 1848, only one significance, namely: the realisation by society in general of the greatest sum of possible happiness for each individual.*

*Those who at that time proclaimed themselves socialists—and this tradition exists among the same class of the present day—took no account of gen-*

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*eral society, of its affiliations, of its necessary average existence, or of its "badly cut coats," so to speak.*

*They refused to see opposed to the rights of the socialist man the general social rights, which mean, in plain words, the rights of each individual man, and which, summed up, become the rights of all men.*

*Religious dogma alone can affirm the absolute right of an individual soul, because each soul comes in contact with other souls only in the infinite. Absoluteness can only be realised in evolutions towards death. But contact with living men has its contingencies which society pulverises well or badly, according as individuals mingle together happily or not, or according as they disturb society or serve it well.*

*Social problems, whether robed in dithyrambic form or clad in offensive rags, are unable to force upon society reforms which are laid down in names unless society has become ready to assimilate them; otherwise they upset society, agitate it, and throw it back on reaction.*

*I am the daughter of a man who was a sincere sectarian, disinterested even to self-sacrifice, and who dreamed of absolute liberty and absolute equality. Until the terrible year of 1870, his mind*

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*mastered my own. For an instant, during the days of the Commune, he thought his dreams were about to be realised. Were he alive now, he would be a disciple of Monsieur Brisson, whose political ancestor he was. He would have pursued only one idea: the upsetting of everything.*

*The revolutionists and the Brissonists are, after all, only belated and antiquated minds, not yet freed from sophistries by the terrible vision of 1870; not stimulated by the lamentations heard from men on French soil, when trodden under foot by Prussia; not armed with patriotic combativeness by the sight of the panting flesh of those provinces which were torn from France, and which, in the figurative image of our country, occupy the place of the heart.*

JULIETTE ADAM.





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# THE ROMANCE OF MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

## I

### MY GRANDMOTHER

**A**S I advance in years, one of the things which astonishes me most is the singular vividness of my memories of my childhood.

Some of them, it is true, have been related many times over to me—and these are the most indistinct—by the nurse who tended me and by my grandparents, for whom everything that concerned their only granddaughter had a primal importance.

However, amid these oft-repeated stories I discover impressions, acts, that might have been known to any of my family, which arise before me with extraordinary precision.

I am the prey, moreover, of a scruple, and I ask myself whether these impressions really do come to me strictly in the manner in which I felt and acted them at the time, or whether, returning to them after all the experiences of life, I do not unconsciously exaggerate them?

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To reassure my wish to be sincere, which has many disturbing suggestions, I endeavour to recall to myself in what terms, at every epoch of my life, I have spoken of my childhood, and also to obtain information from a few notes, too rare, alas! that I wrote in my youth which have been kept by my family. It is, therefore, preoccupied with a jealous desire to be entirely truthful that I begin this work.

As I was brought up by my grandmother, I shall speak of her a great deal. Shall I succeed in making her live again in all her originality, in her passion for the romantic, which she imposed upon us all, making the lives of her family, from the primal and dominating impulsion she gave to all their actions, a perpetual race towards the romantic?

No woman in a gymnasium was ever more closely imprisoned. I never saw my grandmother leave her large house and great garden a hundred times, except to go to mass at eight o'clock on Sundays; on the other hand, I never perceived in any mind such a love for adventure, such a horror for preordained and enforced existence, such a constant and imperious appetite for written or enacted romance.

Her affection for me was so absorbing that I

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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monopolised her life, as it were, from the moment when she consecrated it to me.

I loved her exclusively until the day when my father, with his power for argument, in which he usually opposed the accepted ideas of our surroundings, and, with his kindness of character, took possession of my mind and led me to accept his way of thinking.

Between these two exceptional and somewhat erratic beings, the one possessing admirable generosity of heart, sectarian uprightness, passionately earnest in his unchangeable exaltations, the other with true nobility of soul, rigid virtue, but with an imagination fantastic beyond expression; between these two, loving them in turn, sometimes one more than the other, I was cast about to such a degree that it would have been impossible for me to find foothold for my original thoughts, amid these continual oscillations, if I had not constantly endeavoured to seek for my own true self and to find it. And yet, in spite of this effort, what a long time it took me to free myself from the double imprint given to my character by my beloved relatives!

What shielded me from total absorption by one or the other of them, what caused me to escape from the ardent desire of both, to mould me to

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their image, so dissimilar one from the other, was the very precocious consciousness I had of the precious advantages of possessing personal will.

Between my father and my grandmother I applied myself, instinctively at first, determinedly later, to be something. Was that the starting-point of my resolve to be somebody?

In the ceaseless struggle between my father and grandmother, myself being the coveted prize, there were three of us.

Many stories are involved in my souvenirs, more strange, more eccentric, one than the other, of the marriages of my grandparents and great-grandparents in my maternal grandmother's family.

Their adventures interested my youth to such a degree that I should not hesitate to unfold them to the surprise of my readers were they not too numerous.

My grandmother, who talked and who related stories with a very quick, sharp, and bantering wit, took much pleasure in telling of the romantic lives of her grandmothers. She delighted in repainting for me all these family portraits on her side, never speaking to me of my father's family, which I grew to know later.

She possessed the pride of her merchant and *bourgeoise* caste. I learned through her many

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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obscure things in the history of the struggles of French royalty against the great feudal lords, the internationalists of that time.

She said, speaking to me of her own people: "We are descended from those merchant families of Noyon, of Chauny, of Saint-Quentin, so influential in the councils of the communes, of whom several were seneschals, faithful to their town, to their province above all, faithful to royalty, not always to the king, to religion, not always to the Pope; liberals, men of progress, of pure Gallic race, enriching themselves with great honesty and strongly disdaining those among themselves who, for services rendered to the sovereign, solicited from him titles of nobility."

My grandmother's mother, when fourteen years old, fell madly in love with one of her relatives from Noyon, who had come to talk business, and who, after a day's conversation, more serious than poetical, and continued through breakfast and dinner, received at his departure the following declaration from her: "Cousin, when you come next year it will be to ask me in marriage." They laughed much at this whim, but, as the young girl was an only daughter and would have a large *dot*, the relatives of Noyon, less well off, did not disdain the offer made to their son.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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When she was fifteen, the precocious Charlotte married her cousin Raincourt, a very handsome youth twenty-two years of age, but she died in childbed the following year, giving birth to my grandmother.

The young widower confided little Pélagie to his wife's mother, now a widow herself, and while my great-grandfather married again when twenty-four years of age, and had three daughters, who were very good, very properly educated—Sophie, Constance, and Anastasie—my grandmother grew up like a little savage and sometimes stupefied the quiet town of Chauny by the eccentricities of a spoiled child.

She read everything that fell into her hands, no selection being made for her, and refused to allow herself to be led by any one, or for any reason whatever.

As soon as she was thirteen she announced to her grandmother that her education was finished. She left the boarding-school, where during five years she had learned very little, and devoted herself entirely and for the rest of her life to the reading of novels.

Witty, full of life, brilliant, and even sometimes a little impish, my grandmother had red hair at a time when "carrotty"-coloured hair had but little

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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success. She had superb teeth, a delicate nose with sensitive nostrils, bright green eyes, and her very white complexion was marked with tiny yellow spots, all of which gave her the physiognomy of an odd-looking yet very attractive girl.

Romantic, as had been her mother and her grandmothers, she wished to choose her own husband, and she had not found him when she was fifteen. In spite of the sad fate of her mother, who had died in childbirth, being married too young, Pélagie was in despair at remaining a maid so long.

Mlle. Lenormant's predictions had given birth throughout France to a crowd of fortune-tellers, and my grandmother consulted one, who told her: "You will marry a stranger to this town."

This did not astonish her, for she knew all those who could aspire to her hand, and there was not one among them who answered to all that her imagination sought in a husband. Not a single young man of Chauny of good family had as yet had any romantic adventure.

She took good care not to confide her impatience to her three half-sisters, their father having declared that Pélagie should not marry before she was twenty-one. He wished to keep in his own hands the administration of his first wife's fortune



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as long as possible for the benefit of the three daughters born of his second marriage.

These, moreover, continually said that Pélagie was too eccentric to be marriageable. The eldest, Sophie, was only fourteen months younger than Pélagie, but ten years older in common sense and knowledge.

Pélagie made a voyage to Noyon with her grandmother to look for a husband. She lived for a month in a handsome old house on the Cathedral Square, owned by an aged relative who would have liked to make a second marriage with her grandmother. The love-affair of these old people amused her, but she did not find the husband for whom she was seeking, and—she left as she came.

But one fine day a young surgeon arrived at Chauny in quest of practice.

Here is "the stranger to the town" predicted by the fortune-teller, thought Pélagie even before she had seen him, and she spoke of her hope to her grandmother.

"There is one thing to which I will never consent," replied the latter, "it is that you should marry any one who is not of a good *bourgeoise* family," and her grandmother assumed an air of authority, at which the young girl laughed heartily.

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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The young surgeon's name was Pierre Seron, and he could not have been better born in the *bourgeoise* class. He was descended from one of the physicians of Louis XIV. His father was the most prominent doctor at Compiègne, and his reputation reached as far as Paris. A cousin Seron had been a Conventional with Jean de Bien, and had played a great political rôle in Belgium, from whence the first French Serons had come.

"Of good family!" Pélagie and her grandmother repeated in chorus. "If only he has not had too commonplace an existence," thought Pélagie.

Pierre Seron went up and down all the streets of the town, so as to make believe that he had already secured practice on arriving, and he soon had some successful cases which gave him a reputation.

He was a superb-looking man, his figure resembling that of a grenadier of the Imperial Guard. His face was not handsome. He wore his hair flat *à la* Napoleon, but his forehead was a little narrow, and he had great, convex, grey eyes and too full a nose, but his mouth—he was always clean-shaven—wore an attractive, gay, and mocking smile, in spite of very thick, sensual lips.

He was never seen except in a dress coat and

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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white cravat. In a word, well-built, of fine presence, Pierre Seron had a distinguished air and was really a very handsome man.

He would have needed to be blind, and not to have had the necessity of making a rich marriage, if he had not remarked the interest which Mlle. Pélagie Raincourt took in his comings and goings.

"Why, his father being a doctor at Compiègne, has this young surgeon come to establish himself at Chauny?" asked the grandmother often. "There must be something," she said.

Oh, yes! there was something. And, as Pierre Seron was rather talkative and as Compiègne was not a hundred leagues from Chauny, the story was soon known.

He was simply a hero of romance. "His life is a romance—a great, a real romance," cried Pélagie one day on returning from a visit paid to an old relative whom Pierre Seron was attending and from whom she had heard it all!

Her grandmother, touched by her grandchild's emotion, listened to the story enthusiastically told by Pélagie, who was already in love with Pierre Seron's sad adventure as much as, and perhaps more than, with himself.

He was the second son of a father who hated him from the day of his birth. Doctor Seron loved

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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only his elder son, his pride, he who should have been an "only child."

He continually said this to his timid, submissive wife, who hardly dared to protect the ill-used, beaten younger son, who was made to live with the servants.

Poor little fellow! except for a rare kiss, a furtive caress from his mother, he was a victim to his family's dislike.

One day, when very ill with the croup, his father wished to send him to the hospital, fearing contagion for the elder brother. But his mother on this occasion resisted. She shut herself up with him in his little room, took care of him, watched over him, and by her energy and devotion saved him from death. But she had worn out her own strength. She seemed half-stunned, and the child suffered so much during his convalescence that he was almost in as much danger as while ill.

When he was nine years old, a servant accused him of a theft which he had committed himself, and he was driven from his home one autumn night, possessing nothing but the poor clothes he wore and a few crowns, painfully economised by his mother, who slipped them into his hand without even kissing him.

He lay in front of the door when it was closed

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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upon him, hoping that some one passing would crush him. He cried, he supplicated. The neighbours gathered around him, pitying him, and saying loudly that it was abominable, that the law should protect the unhappy little child, but no one dared to take him to his home.

As soon as Pierre found himself alone again, abandoned by all, he looked for a last time at what he called "the great, wicked and shining eyes" of the lighted windows of the house.

"That," said Pélagie to her grandmother, "was the very phrase Pierre Seron used in relating his story, and the poor boy started off, not knowing whither he went."

Instinctively he turned towards a farm, where every morning at dawn, and in all weathers, his father's servants sent him to get milk.

The farmer's wife had felt pity for him many times before when he was telling her of his sufferings, and he now remembered something she had one day said to him: "You would be happier as a cowherd."

He entered the farmhouse, where the farmers were at supper, and, sitting down beside them, he burst into tears. He could not speak.

"Have they driven you from your home?" asked the farmer's wife. He made a sign: "Yes."

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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Then the good people tried to console him, made him eat some supper, and put him to sleep on some fresh straw in the stable. They kept him with them, giving him work on the farm by which he earned his food.

The next year, when he was ten years of age, though he looked fourteen, so much had he grown, the cowherd being gone, he replaced him. He did everything in his power to prove his gratitude to those who had sheltered him. Being faithful at his work, devoted to his protectors, and very intelligent, he compensated for his youth by his good will, always on the alert.

The farmer, after the day when Pierre Seron went to him, refused to sell any more milk to Doctor Seron, and later he went bravely to express his indignation to him, thinking to humiliate him when he should hear that his son had become a cowherd.

"So much the better," replied his father, harshly, "it is probably the only work that he will ever be able to do."

These words, repeated to Pierre, instead of discouraging him, settled his fate.

"I will also be a Doctor Seron one day," he swore to himself.

His mother had taught him to read Latin-French

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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in a small, old medical dictionary, which never left him, and by the aid of which he improved his very imperfect knowledge of the conjunction of words.

From that day, while he was watching his cows, not only did he learn to read well and to write with a stick on the ground, but he learned also the Latin and French words in the dictionary, one by one, and his youthful brain developed with this rude and imperfect method of study.

Whenever he made a little money he bought books on medicine with it, and studied hard by day; in the evenings he read under the farmer's smoky lamp, and at night by moonlight.

He gathered simples for an herbalist whom he had met in the fields, and received some useful lessons from him. This herbalist took an interest in the poor child, directed his studies a little, and bought him some useful books.

Pierre invented a pretty wicker-basket in which to put fresh cheese during the summer, and, as the farmer's wife sold her cheese in these baskets for a few cents extra, she shared the profits with Pierre.

Some years passed thus. Pierre tried several times to see his mother, but she lived shut up in the house, sequestered, perhaps, and he could never succeed in catching a glimpse of her.

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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His brother, who was five years older than himself, and studying medicine at Paris, passed his time merrily during his vacations at home with the young men of the town.

Pierre saw him pointed out by a friend one day, when he came with a troop of young men and pretty girls to drink warm milk at the farm.

"This milk is served to you by the cowherd of this place, who is your legitimate brother," said Pierre to him, presenting him with a frothy bowl of it.

"My brother is dead," replied he.

"You will find him before many years very much alive in Paris, sir!" answered Pierre.

On hearing of this incident there was much talk at Compiègne over the half-forgotten story of the exiled and abandoned child.

As the elder son gave very little satisfaction to his father, they said it was God who was punishing the latter for his cruelty, but no one paid any attention to the cowherd's prediction.

When he was nineteen Pierre possessed eleven hundred francs of savings. One autumn day when his father took the diligence, as he did every fortnight to go and see his eldest son at Paris, and especially to recommend him to his professors, who could do nothing with this student, an enemy of



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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study, Pierre Seron, the younger, with bare feet, in order not to use his shoes, and with his knapsack on his back, started for the capital.

One can imagine in what sort of hovel he lived in the Latin quarter. Before inscribing himself at the Faculty, he sought out night-work on the wharves. His tall figure was an excellent recommendation for him, and he was engaged as an unloader of boats from eight o'clock in the evening to two o'clock in the morning at the price of forty-five cents. He needed no more on which to live, and he even hoped to add to his small hoard, which he feared would not be sufficient to pay for his terms and his books.

How many times have I, myself, made my grandfather tell me of this epoch of his life, which he recalled with pride.

Pélagie continued her story to her grandmother, who listened open-mouthed, touched to tears.

Pierre had taken his working clothes with him, and every night he became, not a dancing costumed sailor at public balls like his brother, but a boat-heaver on the Seine wharves.

During the day he followed the lectures with such zeal, such application, such passionate ardour, that he was soon remarked by his professors.

His name struck them; they questioned him,

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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and one of them whom Doctor Seron had offended by reproaching him rudely for severity towards his eldest son, extolled the younger Seron, took special interest in him, and soon two camps were formed: that of the hard workers and friends of Pierre, and that of the rakes, friends of Théophile Seron. One day they came to blows, and Pierre, taking his brother by the arms, shook him vigorously.

“I told you that your brother, the cowherd, would find you again in Paris,” he said, letting him fall rather heavily on the floor.

While his brother was holding high revel, Pierre was freezing under the roofs in winter, and roasting beneath them in summer, eating and sleeping badly, and working every night on the wharves. On Sundays he mended his clothes, bought at the old clothes-man's, which were far from being good, and he washed his own poor linen. Pierre wore only shirt-fronts and wristbands of passable quality, his shirt being of the coarsest material. His socks had only tops and no bottoms. He suffered in every way from poverty and all manner of privations.

But he had, on the other hand, the satisfaction of feeling the advantage it was to have had refined parents. He easily acquired good manners, and his hereditary intelligence seemed to fit him for the

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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most arduous medical studies. He found that he possessed faculties of assimilation which astonished himself. To be brief, he passed his examinations brilliantly, while his brother failed in every one.

Doctor Seron, whom he met from time to time with his brother, was now an old man, bent down beneath the weight of troubles; his well-beloved son was ruining him.

When Pierre Seron had finished his studies and obtained his degrees, he wrote to his father and mother, saying that he would return to them like a son who had only been absent for a time, and that he forgave everything. He received no answer from his mother, but a letter full of furious maledictions from his father.

His friend, the herbalist of Compiègne, discovered that there was a chance for him at Chauny, and lent him some money. He found no help except from this faithful protector.

"And so it happens," continued Pélagie Raincourt, "that Pierre Seron has come to establish himself in our town, where I have been waiting for him," and she added: "Grandmother, he must be my husband."

"Certainly," replied her grandmother, "I love him, brave heart! already, but he must fall in love with you."

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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Pélagie had never thought of that.

A friend was commissioned to ask Doctor Seron—they already gave him this title, without adding his first name, in order to avenge his father's cruelties—a friend was asked to question him with regard to the possible feelings with which Mlle. Pélagie Raincourt had inspired him.

"She is a handsome girl," he replied, "but I detest red-haired women."

It can be imagined what Pélagie felt when her grandmother, with infinite precautions, told her his answer, for she had always thought herself irresistible.

Her despair and rage were so great that she threatened to throw herself out of the window. As she was in her room, on the first story, she leaned out so suddenly that her frightened grandmother caught hold of her, and pulling her violently backward, caught her foot in Pélagie's long gown, fell and dislocated her wrist.

They sent for Doctor Seron, who came at once, and more like a bone-setter, anxious to make an effect on important patients than like a prudent surgeon, he reset her wrist.

Pélagie lavished the most affectionate care on her beloved grandmother, who was suffering through her fault. She was haughty, almost in-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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solent to Doctor Seron, who "detested red-haired women," but she struck him by her extreme grace, and by her wit, which he was surprised to find so original, so brilliant in a provincial girl. He came twice a day, and, cruel though he was, he pleased Pélagie more than ever with his attractive Compiègne accent, and that of Paris, a little lisping.

But she had endured too many emotions. She was taken with fever and obliged to go to bed. Pierre took great interest in attending her, and soon lost his head seeing himself adored by an attractive, rich young girl scarcely sixteen, and loved maternally by her grandmother, for he had always considered family affection as the most rare and enviable happiness.

One evening Pierre declared his love in as burning words as Pélagie could desire; and then and there they both went and knelt before her delighted grandmother and obtained her consent to their marriage.

Doctor Seron asked at once that the wedding day should be fixed, but they were obliged to enlighten him on the existing situation of affairs, and to acquaint him with the obstacles to so prompt a solution.

Pierre, who was very poor and in no wise insen-

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## MY GRANDMOTHER

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sible to the advantages of his betrothed's fortune, found it somewhat hard to abandon to his father-in-law, as the grandmother advised, all, or the greater part of, the famous *dot* of his first wife, which Monsieur Raincourt did not wish to relinquish. He proposed to reflect a few days over the best measures to take and to see a notary. But the notary saw no possibility of doing without the father's consent, or to escape from the conditions which Pélagie's grandmother presumed he would exact.

"I will double," said the latter, "what I intended to give Pélagie, if her father bargains over my beloved grandchild's happiness."

Doctor Seron went off to ask Monsieur Raincourt for his daughter Pélagie's hand, which was refused until he proposed—if he obtained her hand—very pretty, by the way—to ask no account of his tutorship.

The agreement was concluded and the wedding day fixed.

Pierre Seron wrote again to his mother and father, persisting in begging some token of their affection. But he received no word, not a single line from his mother, only more curses from his father.

He learned by a letter from his friend the herb-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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alist, who consented to be one of the witnesses to his marriage, that his brother was dying at Compiègne; that his father, two thirds ruined by having lost his practice through his too frequent journeys to Paris to snatch away his son from his debaucheries, had been struck with paralysis.

Thus was misfortune overwhelming him who had grown hard in injustice and in cruelty, while the poor boy, so shamefully driven from his home, saw his situation greatly improved for the better, and the hour of complete happiness approaching.

He was about to have his dreams realised, to possess a fine fortune, a captivating wife, of whom he became more and more fond, and who loved him madly.

But on the eve of the day so earnestly desired, Pélagie was determined to provoke her sisters, already irritated at this marriage which made her so insolently happy. She wished to take revenge for all she had endured hearing her youngest sister, Sophie, say constantly to her: "You are not marriageable."

And, when the contract was signed, when everything was ready and all obstacles overcome for the wedding on the morrow, a very violent scene took place between the future Madame Pierre Seron and her three sisters.

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Pélagie's stepmother took sides with her daughters, their father with his wife, and the marriage was cancelled, Monsieur Raincourt taking back his consent and disavowing his promises.

Pélagie's grandmother lost patience with her, Pierre was in despair, and the young girl took to her bed, furious with herself, weeping, biting her pillow, haunted in her feverish sleeplessness with the most extraordinary projects, and making up her mind to do the most unheard-of things.

At break of day, beside herself, not knowing what she was doing, she left the house in her dressing-gown and night-cap, and started on foot for Noyon, saying to herself she would seek asylum with her grandmother's old friend and her relative.

What she wished above all was to escape Pierre's reproaches, her grandmother's blame, and not to hear the echo of all the gossip of the town, which she knew would reach her ears. The humiliation of being condemned by public opinion, the sorrow to have made Pierre suffer, who had already suffered so much, was such agonising pain to her that she felt obliged to fly. She was trying to escape from her own self-condemnation, which followed her.

After proceeding some miles, little used to walk-



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ing, exhausted, she sat down on a heap of stones, her head in her hands, weeping aloud in despair.

A horseman passed in a dress coat and white cravat, bare-headed and mounted on a saddleless horse: it was Pierre, and he saw her.

"Your father has consented again," he said, jumping off the horse. "Come quickly, I will put you up behind, and, to be sure that he does not take back his word again and that you will not commit any other folly, we will go straight to the church, where your grandmother has had everything prepared. It was she who divined that you had taken the road to Noyon, unless you should have come to my house, for she even suspected you of being capable of that, silly girl that you are!"

He lifted her up on the horse, supported her there with one arm, while with the other hand he held a simple halter passed round the animal's neck.

"Come, come," said he, "it is high time you should have a master. You deserve to be whipped."

"But," she replied, made merry with the romantic adventure; "I am not going to be married in a night-cap."

"Why not? It is a penance you deserve, and you have great need of absolution. You can dress

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yourself as a bride when you have become one, at the end of the wedding."

And so it was, sitting up behind a bare-backed horse, that my grandmother made her entrance into Chauny. It was nine o'clock in the morning, and all the gossips were at the windows, in the street, and at the church door.

Pélagie got down from the horse, with hair dishevelled under her night-cap, and her eyes still swollen from tears. A woman in the street pinned a white pink on her night-cap, and she entered the church on Pierre's arm. There was a general outburst of laughter. Never had such a bride been seen.

The old priest, who was attached to Pélagie on account of her charity and kindness, could not keep from laughing himself, and he made haste, smiling through half of the ceremony.

Pélagie turned and faced the crowd. People thought her confusion would make her feel like sinking to the ground. "It is a merry marriage," was all she said. And thus was my very romantic grandmother married, scandalising a great number of persons and amusing others.

The white pink and the night-cap became family relics. I have seen and held them in my hand, knowing their history.



## II

### WHEN THE ALLIES WERE AT THE GATES OF PARIS

**T**WENTY days after his marriage, although he had drawn one of the first numbers when the drawing for lots for the army took place, Doctor Seron received orders to leave for the imperial army as surgeon. He was obliged to find a surgeon to take his place, and this cost a very large sum.

At the end of the year Madame Pierre Seron became the mother of twin daughters. The young couple were perfectly happy. The poor, abandoned child had become a tender, glad father, who would return often to the house to rock his daughters and to amuse them by singing to them.

The children were not eight months old when the poor young surgeon received new orders to join the Imperial army in Germany. Pierre Seron did not look for a substitute this time. His wife's *dot* was diminishing too fast, and he was obliged to think of future *dots* for his daughters. He left them with a breaking heart.

Pélagie's grandmother went to live with her, because it was impossible to leave the young

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## AT THE GATES OF PARIS

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woman alone, especially as her father, stepmother, and sisters, to whom Doctor Seron had turned a cold shoulder, often making them ridiculous by his witty remarks, and whose lives he had made quite unpleasant, would seize the young surgeon's departure as an occasion to revenge themselves; but Pélagie and her grandmother were upheld by Pierre's numerous friends, and all the town took sides with the half-widowed young woman, and blamed and annoyed Monsieur Raincourt to such a degree that he finally left Chauny to go and settle in the department of Soissons, from whence his second wife had come.

Pélagie breathed freely, for her father had never ceased to annoy her. But, alas! misfortune came to overwhelm her. She lost her grandmother and was left alone as head of the family, and obliged, before she was eighteen, to look after her fortune, and the intervals between the times when she received news from her husband became more and more lengthened.

One morning Chauny awoke threatened with war. The Allies were at the town's gates, and it was said they plundered everything on their way, and, what was worse, the first eight Prussians who had appeared on the canal bridge had been slain. Two hours after, the inhabitants of Chauny were

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apprised that if they did not pay within twenty-four hours an enormous war indemnity they would all be put to the sword.

Madame Seron, alone, without protection, was one of the most heavily taxed, and in order to pay the share exacted from her, she was obliged to make ruinous engagements.

She passed a night digging a hole in her cellar under a large cask which she removed with difficulty, and which the wet-nurse of one of her young daughters—she nursed the other one herself—aided her in replacing. In this hole she hid her jewels, her silver, and a box containing her most valuable papers. This done, she decided, like many others, to abandon her house, very prominent on the square, where the invaders were to come and be lodged.

The inhabitants lost their heads, they fled and hid themselves in the woods, where the enemy, they said, would not venture.

Madame Seron took a few clothes with her and a little linen, which she put in a bag and carried on her back like a poor woman. The wet-nurse carried the two babies, and they set forth on the road to Viry.

On the way Madame Seron saw a convoy of mules returning unladen from the town whither

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they had carried wood. Each mule had two baskets attached to his pack-saddle. She put the nurse on one of them and one of the little twins in each basket. The nurse was a peasant and knew how to ride a mule, but the young mother was now afraid of everything, and, instead of mounting another, she walked by the side of the one carrying her little ones, resting her hand on one of the baskets.

She met the Messrs. de Sainte-Aldegonde on horseback, wearing white gloves, who, the mule-driver said, had been writing for their "good friends the enemies" for several days and were now going to meet them.

The Messrs. de Sainte-Aldegonde were galloping, and the brisk pace of their horses roused the mules, which started off in a mad race. The nurse was thrown off. The little children screamed with pain; their mother running, frightened, cried and supplicated for help.

"Never," said she afterward, "did I suffer such torture."

The mule-driver jumped on one of the hindermost mules and galloped towards the one whose baskets held the twins. He stopped it, and their mother and the nurse, who was only slightly wounded on the forehead and cheek, ran and res-

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cued the babies from the baskets, who, with their hands and faces covered with blood, had fainted. The wretched women held them in their arms, looking at them overcome with grief, and, as if dumb-stricken, uttering not a word, they wept.

Mechanically they turned back on the road to Chauny, not knowing where they went, nor what they were doing, with eyes fixed on the motionless and bleeding little faces. They entered a house, where they asked for water and washed the wounds. The poor mother had kept the knapsack and bag of linen. They undressed the little ones, changed their blood-stained frocks, rubbed them with vinegar and brandy, and almost at the same moment they opened their eyes and began to sob and cry.

Their wounds continued to bleed and they were pitiful to behold. When Madame Seron reached her house some Cossacks were about to blow open the closed door; the nurse approached with the key and opened it. She also had her forehead and cheek tied up with a bloody cloth. The child she was carrying was groaning, the other in the mother's arms was crying.

The Cossacks spoke a little French and were touched with pity at the sight. There were four of them, two of whom took the babies and held

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them in their arms while the mother and nurse washed their poor little faces and applied court-plaster to the wounds.

Madame Seron, after a few hours, felt a little reassured about her children and was completely at rest regarding the Cossacks, whom she treated as kindly as she could. The following days they assisted in doing the housework, the cook having fled to the woods. They walked with the children, amused them, and took devoted care of them, for the little ones had not recovered from the shock they had suffered; their nurses' milk, disturbed by fright, gave them fever. The children grew weaker and, in spite of the energetic care that a doctor, a friend of their father's, took of them, he could not save them; they were taken with convulsions and both died on the same day. The Cossacks wept over them with their mother.

Quite alone now, suffering from her country's misfortunes, for she was very patriotic, in despair at her beloved little children's death and that of her grandmother, at her husband's absence and the dangers he was incurring, cheated by the men of business with whom she was struggling, life became so horribly hard to the young woman that she attempted to kill herself. A Cossack saved her, and his comrades and he tried to console her in such



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a simple, touching manner that she sadly took up life again.

Madame Seron repeated all her life, and in later years she profoundly engrafted in me, her grandchild, this axiom: "One must hate the English, fear Prussian brutality, and love the Russians."

My grandfather returned from the army followed by a German woman, who would not leave him, and who refused to believe in his marriage. He had great trouble in getting rid of her, and succeeded in so doing only because his wife took up arms against her. Wounded to the quick, Pélagie found courage to counteract this influence only in her passion for the romantic. She was enacting a romance and her struggles with her rival were full of incident. Finally she succeeded, after having been assailed in her own house by the German, in having the woman taken to the frontier.

Doctor Seron had been present at many battles, among which those of Lutzen and of Bautzen were the principal. He talked much about them, as he also did of the arms and legs he had amputated with his master, Larrey, surgeon-in-chief of the Imperial armies, the number of which increased every year.

Pierre's conjugal fidelity, lost during his cam-

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paings, never returned. He became a sort of Don Juan, about whose conquests the ill-natured tongues of the town were always wagging. When I grew up, how many great-uncles were pointed out to me!

Having been deprived of wine in Germany, he loved it all the more on his return to France. Very sober in the morning until breakfast hour, at which time he returned home after having performed his operations at the hospital or in the town, he drank regularly every day a dozen bottles of a light Mâcon wine, always the same. To say that this great, portly man got drunk would be an exaggeration, but in the afternoon he was talkative, full of jokes and braggings to such a degree that all the white lies, all the jests that were told at Chauny and its environs were called "serenades."

My grandmother's passion for her husband faded away, illusion after illusion, in spite of the prodigious effort she made not to condemn my grandfather on the first proofs he gave of his sensual appetites, of his brutal way of enjoying life. Pierre's strength was so great that in all physical exercises, hunting, and fishing he wore out the most intrepid; his love for excitement was so artless, his gaiety so exuberant that people overlooked the sensual self-indulgence of his tempera-

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ment, his excesses even, when they would not have pardoned them in others.

But little by little they wearied of all this at his home, while his friends could not have enough of him. His wife saw him depart at dawn and not return until far into the night without regret. He was never late for meals, about which great care had to be taken for him.

"It is elementary politeness," he would say, drawing out his lisping accent on the word "elementary," "not to leave the companion of one's home, if not of one's life, alone at table."





### III

#### THE MARRIAGE OF MY FATHER AND MOTHER

**A** DAUGHTER, Olympe, was born to them after the German woman's departure; her mother nursed her, brought her up with loving care, and you may be sure that the imaginative Pélagie dreamed at an early hour of the possible romance of the future marriage of her only child.

Unfortunately Olympe distressed her by the fantastical turn of her mind. She took great interest from her earliest age in the details of housekeeping, was troublesome, humdrum even, said her mother.

She disliked to read, was much annoyed at her father's absence from home, whose motives she loudly incriminated. Urged to this by the servants' stories, she quarrelled with him, bitterly reproached her mother for the number of books she read; and she introduced into the home, where the careless indifference of one member, the resignation of the other, might have brought about peace, an agitation which fed the constant disputes.

However, the husband and wife, so much disunited, were proud of their daughter's beauty. Her father would often say: "She deserves a

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prince," while her mother would reply: "A shepherd would please her better."

Nothing foretold that this admirable statue would be animated some day. Olympe was fifteen years old, and in her family the marriage bells had always rung at that age. Olympe's parents were humiliated at the thought that no one had as yet asked for their daughter's hand.

The romantic Pélagie dreamed of an "unforeseen" marriage for Olympe, as she had done formerly for herself. But no predictions had been made concerning it. Madame Seron could never induce her daughter to go to a fortune-teller with her. Alas! the way seemed obscure, but just as it had been impossible for her to find her own hero among the youths of the town, so did it seem impossible to discover another hero for Olympe at Chauny.

How was it, one would say, that she did not judge her own experience of the "unforeseen" lamentable? On the contrary, Pélagie regretted nothing, and, were it to be done over again, she would have made the same marriage, taking all its consequences.

The desired romance had, after all, been written. How many finalities of marriage resembled hers! The important thing was to have loved. Her Don

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## MARRIAGE OF FATHER AND MOTHER

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Juan of a husband did not disgust her. She, the faithful wife, although living in a manner separated from him, still preserved, in the romance of her life, a rôle in no wise commonplace. Her husband, obliged to respect her, could not forget the past either, and he sometimes courteously alluded to it, adding: "I am always constant to my affection for my better half, even amid my inconsistencies."

And this was quite true. He did really love his wife, and would not have hesitated to sacrifice his most devoted women friends to her. He never opposed any of her plans, and he repeated her words: "What shall we do, where shall we seek, how shall we discover a husband for Olympe?"

They lived in the Rue de Noyon, the house on the square having become hateful to Madame Seron, who had lost, while living in it, her grandmother and her twins, and had also suffered there from the invasion and from scenes with the German woman. Now, in this street, opposite to one of the windows of the large drawing-room where Pélagie passed the greater part of her days embroidering, and especially devouring novels by the dozen, was the large front door of a young boys' school. Madame Seron knew every pupil, every professor.

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She had remarked among the latter a young man of tall stature and handsome presence, who never left the school without a book in his hand. He bowed respectfully to her several times a day, for she involuntarily raised her eyes every time the door opposite was shut noisily.

One evening, when the master of the school, M. Blangy, came to consult Doctor Seron, whom he knew he would find at meal-time, Madame Seron questioned him about his new professor.

“He has a very romantic history.”

“Tell us about him.”

“His name is Jean Louis Lambert. His father, when a baby, was brought one day dressed in a richly embroidered frock covered with lace by a midwife to a well-to-do farmer of Pontoise, near Noyon, who, having no children, consented to receive the child (who, the midwife said, was an orphan), and to bring him up. A girl was born to the farmer five years later, and the two young persons, who loved each other, were married afterwards.

“My professor is the eldest of four children. His father wished to make him a priest and placed him at the Seminary of Beauvais. On entering there he was remarked for his intelligence, his religious ardour, his poetic talent, and for his

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## MARRIAGE OF FATHER AND MOTHER

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theological science, and they soon endowed him with the minor orders.

“The archbishop of Beauvais became his protector and made Jean Louis Lambert his secretary. He was not bigoted, but very pious, even mystical, and they hastened on for him the moment when he should be invested with the major orders.

“On the evening before the day when he was to pronounce his new sacerdotal vows, he was present at a dinner which the archbishop gave to the members of the high clergy of his diocese, and he heard these gentlemen talk at table like ordinary convivial guests. As the dinner went on, they exchanged witty remarks on things terrestrial and even celestial, which seemed to Jean Louis Lambert suggested by the devil himself. A stupid joke about the pillars of the church confessing idle nonsense completely revolted the young postulant. On account of a few jests the young fellow, who was so artless, so little worldly, felt the whole scaffolding of his faith fall to the ground. He wished to speak, to cry anathema to those who seemed blasphemers to him, but, trembling, he slid out of the dining-room, went up to his room, took a valise, in which he packed his books, the manuscript of his ‘Canticles to the Virgin,’ his scant



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wardrobe, and left the archbishop's residence half wild. Almost running, he walked twenty-four leagues, and arrived at his father's house exhausted, in despair, and declared he would never be a priest.

"His excitement, the mad race he had run, gave him so bad a fever that his life was in danger. When he was cured he was obliged to suffer the pious exhortations of the old village priest who had instructed him; his masters came themselves to endeavour to win him back and calm his indignation. They succeeded in proving to him that he had exaggerated things to a ridiculous degree, but the ideal of his vocation was so shattered that his disillusion soon made him an atheist.

"I confess to you," added M. Blangy, "that I am somewhat alarmed at having him as professor of philosophy, and I made some observations lately which offended him; but he is such a hard worker, and so intelligent, so full of loyalty and so conscientious, that in spite of my fears I do not regret having taken him into my school. His pupils adore him and make rapid progress with him, and were it not for his passion for negation, I think I should take him as my partner."

This was sufficient to inflame Olympe's mother's imagination. A romance was within her

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## MARRIAGE OF FATHER AND MOTHER

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reach. She would protect this young man, thrown out of place, who had abandoned his first proposed career and who was without fortune; she would make something of him, and induce him to accept the career she proposed for him, that of a physician. She would have in him a grateful son, who should become her daughter's husband, and, perhaps, the father of a little girl whom she would love as her grandmother had loved her, and whom she would bring up as she had been educated.

"As badly?" asked her husband, laughing, to whom she at once confided her plans.

One Sunday Madame Seron invited Jean Louis Lambert to breakfast. He almost lost his mind with joy, for he was hopelessly in love with Olympe, his inaccessible star.

After breakfast my grandfather, according to his habit, hastened to leave the house, understanding besides that he would be in the way. Olympe also having left home to pass the afternoon with a friend, the romantic Pélagie, alone with her *protégé*, whom she already called to herself her "dear child," experienced one of the sweetest joys of her life.

She questioned him, and—miracle of miracles! His great ambition was to be a doctor! But he could not impose upon his parents the expense that

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would necessitate the taking up of a new career. They were all so good to him, his sisters so devoted; and his young brother had just entered the army in order that he should not be obliged to perform his military service.

Madame Seron waded in complete felicity. She talked, and appeared to the young professor like some unreal, beneficent fairy, who, with a touch of her magic wand, changes a woodcutter into a prince, a disinherited man into the most fortunate one in the world.

Jean Louis Lambert's emotion, his gratitude, were expressed in such noble, almost passionate, terms that it brought tears to her eyes, and she at once assumed the rôle of an ideal mother to him.

They agreed, approved, and understood each other in everything. Jean Louis—his protectrice already left off the Lambert—during the next three months would prepare himself for his new studies, and then, on some very plausible pretext, would leave the school and go to Paris, where his future mother-in-law, as an advance on her daughter's *dot*, would provide for all expenses until he should have passed his examinations.

He would study doubly hard, and, as soon as he should have obtained his degrees, he would return

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## MARRIAGE OF FATHER AND MOTHER

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and marry Olympe, whom, meanwhile, her mother would influence favourably towards the match.

Isolated in Paris, with but one friend from Chauny, Bergeron, who later fired a pistol at Louis Philippe, Jean Louis worked with passionate ardour. In love for the first time and with the woman whom he knew would be his wife, infatuated with his studies, his mystical adoration for the Virgin transformed into a desire to possess the object he adored, he lived in a fever, impatient to deserve the promised happiness, and finding the reward for all his struggles far superior to the efforts he made to acquire it.

Doctor Seron completely approved his wife's romantic plan, considering that it was without question his place, who had been so cruelly abandoned by all save the humble, to protect a young, hard-working, and virtuous man.

This latter adjective he rolled out with great emphasis, which much amused Olympe's mother every time he pronounced it.

"No one more than myself esteems, admires, and honours purity and virtue," said Pélagie's amusing husband, "for no one is so conscious of the rarity, the beauty of these two traits."

A renewal of good feeling flourished between the husband and wife. Every letter from their

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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future son-in-law was read, commented upon, admired, and even re-read by them both; these youthful, exuberant, loving letters, often containing very good poetry, rejuvenated the parents' hearts, already extremely proud of him whom they called between themselves: "Our son."

Olympe, while her parents were enthusiastic, was perfectly indifferent. One day, when they were both exasperated at her, they asked whether or not she would consent to this marriage. The young girl replied to her anxious mother, and to her father, revolted at seeing her so prosaic:

"Since you desire it, since you have committed yourselves so far that you cannot withdraw, I will resign myself to it. Where you have tied the goat she will browse."

Ah! that phrase, what a rôle it played in the disputes between the Lambert and Seron families, so frequent in later years.

Olympe's parents were assailed day and night by these words, which they repeated to themselves aghast. "Where you have tied the goat she will browse."

Jean Louis Lambert returned to Chauny and was married, a little disappointed at his wife's coldness, but trusting to his passion to inspire her with the love he himself felt.

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## MARRIAGE OF FATHER AND MOTHER

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Olympe Lambert was tall, with a handsome figure like her mother's; she had an olive complexion, large, velvety, and luminous eyes, a charming mouth with small teeth, a delicate nose with pink nostrils, brown hair with ruddy tints in it, handsome arms and hands, and a very small foot. It was impossible to discover a more fascinating creature to look at and one of less good-humour.



## IV

### BORN IN AN INN

**D**OCTOR SERON, after the death of his parents, had renewed acquaintance with one of his uncles on the maternal side, a physician in a hamlet in the department of Oise, between Verberie and Seulis. This uncle, then very old, had become a widower and, being without children, he ceded his practice to the son-in-law of his only remaining relative, and gladly welcomed the young couple in his house.

Living with his uncle, following his counsels, Jean Louis Lambert succeeded marvellously well with his new patients for three years. A son was born to them, and the young people were happy, he singing always the praise of love in his letters to his mother and father-in-law, while she "browsed" agreeably without wishing to confess it.

Doctor and Madame Seron congratulated themselves daily for the happy choice they had made in their daughter's husband.

But misfortunes came, one after another, to the young couple. Their great-uncle died suddenly

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## BORN IN AN INN

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of an attack of apoplexy. Their well-beloved son, who, even at the age of eighteen months, gave proof of exceptional intelligence, died after a three days' illness from the effects of a violent scolding from his mother, which gave him convulsions; finally, the small borough they inhabited was entirely burned down, except their grand-uncle's house which his nephews had inherited, and which Madame Lambert, with a heroism admired by everyone, saved from the flames with a small watering-pump, in spite of the wounds she received from the burning brands.

The small borough was completely destroyed, deserted, ruined; the young physician's patients were dispersed and captured by competition in an adjacent town. The uncle's house was sold at a very bad bargain, the furniture given away, so to say, and, after some debts had been paid, there remained very little for the young couple, who took refuge at Verberie at the Hotel of The Three Monarchs.

The *dot*, broken into for Jean Louis Lambert's studies, and wasted afterwards in expensive chemical experiments—he had had a laboratory built for himself—dripped away as money always dripped through the impracticable hands of Olympe's husband.



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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As he was very intimate with the Decamps, Alexandre, and the painter, who lived near Verberie during the summer, Jean Louis hoped to create a position for himself in new surroundings.

A certain Doctor Bernhardt, a great chemist, who lived at Compiègne and often went to visit his friends, the Decamps, struck with the science and original views of the young physician, proposed to make him a partner in certain researches which were to bring about a discovery as extraordinary as that of the philosopher's stone.

One fine day, influenced by the Decamps, fascinated by a sort of German Mephistopheles, he left his wife, who was expecting the birth of a child, at the Hotel of The Three Monarchs; but he was to receive a large salary and go to see her every Sunday until the time came when he could settle her in a home at Compiègne.

Madame Lambert, after her baby son's death, had wounded her mother cruelly. The latter had scarcely seen her and her husband more than three times at Chauny in three years. She invited her to make her a visit, saying they could mourn over the child together and adding that only a mother with her affection could console a daughter for a son's loss.

Olympe wrote to her mother that her sorrow was

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## BORN IN AN INN

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too dumb to be understood by her. Madame Seron, in despair at receiving such a letter, addressed one to her son-in-law; but as it was at the time when the fire took place, her letter received no direct response. Jean Louis merely related to her in full the details of the catastrophe of the small borough and of Olympe's heroism which had saved the house, and he added unkindly, being ungrateful for the first time in his life: "Your daughter's heroism was not expressed merely in words." He thus accentuated the tone of his wife's letter instead of attenuating it.

He did not wish to have any explanations with his mother-in-law, neither to have her come to his house, nor to go to hers, knowing very well that if circumstances had turned against him he was responsible for them in part from the manner in which he had mismanaged his resources.

The sale of the house, the departure for Verberie, his entering Doctor Bernhardt's employ, all was done without a word from Jean Louis to his father and mother-in-law.

Doctor Seron heard of these things from his friend, the herbalist of Compiègne, who came to warn him about Doctor Bernhardt and to give him the most alarming information concerning him. He was worse than an impostor, living a luxurious

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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life, and pulling wool over people's eyes; it was said he was a swindler.

Madame Seron, on hearing this, addressed a supreme appeal to her son-in-law, enlightening him on the danger he was running, but, alas! it was too late. Jean Louis, completely hypnotised by Doctor Bernhardt, following his researches with passion, not only received no salary, but he had thrown the money received from the sale of the house and what remained of his wife's *dot* into Doctor Bernhardt's crucible, which was like that of the philosopher's stone.

I was born at the Hotel of The Three Monarchs. My father announced the happy event to my grandmother by this simple note: "Your grandchild, born on the 4th of October at five o'clock in the afternoon, is called Juliette."

What! this granddaughter, so much dreamed of, so much desired, was there, at Verberie, not far off, and she could not run to embrace her, to take and hold her for an instant in her arms?

My grandmother did not cease weeping and my grandfather shed tears with her.

"Think, Pierre, of that little one in an inn, of Olympe, our daughter, in such a place, with, perhaps, only a partition separating her from some drunken brute making a noise. Oh! it will kill me."

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## BORN IN AN INN

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"And her husband far from her, and in his perpetual goings and comings not able to watch over our only child's health or that of our granddaughter," added Doctor Seron, "it is dreadful." And, with hands clasped together, they sobbed. What was to be done?

They wrote again several times, but received only one answer as curt as it was short:

"The mother and child are well."

A commercial traveller, a patient of my grandfather, had heard at Verberie that my father was a victim of a miserable fellow, who imposed upon him, making him work like a labourer, promising him everything under heaven, and spending every cent he possessed, and that my mother, still at Verberie, owed a large sum at the hotel and might at any moment, together with her daughter, be turned out of doors without resources.

My grandmother at these revelations wished to leave immediately for Verberie; my grandfather prevented her. He sent the commercial traveller to the proprietor of The Three Monarchs to assure him that he would be paid by Madame Lambert's parents, but that he must say nothing of it to her, and must, on no account, acquaint her husband about it.

On the commercial traveller's return my grand-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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mother had all the details she desired, some of which were lamentable, others consoling.

My mother nursed me herself. I was a very healthy baby, but Madame Lambert, suffering from poverty and cold, for she often deprived herself of fire, the commercial traveller said, was evidently losing her health. But the hotel proprietor, reassured about his debt, would arrange things so that the young mother should suffer no longer.

My grandfather loved his daughter Olympe more than did my grandmother, because she resembled his own mother. She was submissive to her husband to the point of sacrificing her child to her wifely duties, and therefore he suffered about his child as well as his grandchild, while my grandmother suffered especially on my account.

Again, my grandmother wished to leave to come to us, but her husband calmed her with his oft-repeated words:

“You will only upset her, and, as she is nursing her child, she will give her fever and you will kill her. Wait at least for nine months, and then you can wean Juliette, and we will decide what to do according to circumstances.”

Hour by hour, day by day, week by week, the nine months, sadly counted, passed at last. At

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## BORN IN AN INN

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the end of the ninth month the commercial traveller received a letter from the proprietor of The Three Monarchs, saying that my father had gone to Brussels with Doctor Bernhardt, who went there ostensibly to make some final experiments, in reality to escape legal prosecution by flight, and that my mother and I were abandoned.

As soon as this letter was communicated to my grandparents there was no longer any hesitation, and my grandmother left for Verberie.

My mother, clad in a worn-out gown, was shivering over a small fire of shavings, thin, pale, her handsome face grown more sombre than ever. She welcomed her mother with a violent scene, but my grandmother had come with prepared resolutions which nothing could move.

“You have not the right, through fidelity to I know not what wifely duty and which your husband, it seems to me, is far from reciprocating, to live here in this wretchedness, and, above all, to impose it on your child. You shall leave this hotel tomorrow and return to your parents, and your husband, when he desires to do so, can come to find you as well at their home as here in this inn.”

“Where you have tied the goat she must browse,” she replied.

My grandmother, exasperated at these words,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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exclaimed: "Your husband doesn't even give you grass to browse on."

My mother remained obstinate with her habitual sourness, her bad temper, and her motiveless recriminations which she tried, as usual, to combine together, in order to prove that she was made unhappy by everyone.

"But, if you are turned out of doors with your daughter, where will you go?"

"Into the street, and Jean Louis will have the responsibility of having put me there. I do not wish that he should be absolved for his conduct by any one."

It was therefore in order to prove her husband's wrong-doing that she suffered abandonment and privations.

My grandmother said nothing more; but she arranged in her mind a plan for carrying me off.

"Whatever you decide," she said, after the scene was over, "you must pay your debts, if you have any here. Do you wish me to give you some money?"

"Willingly."

"Well, about how much do you think you owe?"

My mother named a sum.

"I am going to unpack my bag, have my din-

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## BORN IN AN INN

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ner served, and send you some wood, and I will return with the money you need to pay your debt."

My grandmother often told me afterwards that she did not look at me, nor kiss me, so as not to betray her emotion.

She went to find the proprietor and arranged my carrying off with him. A berline would be ready in a moment to take my grandmother and me to the town gates. The driver of the diligence which would leave an hour after us would reserve the *coupé* seats for us, and would pick us up at a point agreed upon between the berline-driver and himself, and we would speed, changing horses once or twice, to Chauny. The hotel proprietor was to detain my mother discussing the bill, and to keep her for an hour at least, and he promised not to furnish her with a carriage to pursue us. Besides, it was agreed that my grandmother was to give to him the money necessary for my mother to join us in a few days.

My grandmother learned from him the amount of the bill, and it was arranged that she should give my mother a little less than the amount, so that the latter should not feel justified in taking any of the money in order to follow us.

My grandmother returned to her daughter's room, now well warmed. All was ready in her



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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own room for departure—a nursing-bottle full of warm milk and a large shawl in which to wrap me.

Her heart, she told me later many times, beat faster than it would have done had she run off with my grandfather in her youth.

The hotel proprietor had the bill taken to Madame Lambert, and sent her word that he was ready to discuss it if she should have any observations to make concerning it. My grandmother looked at the bill and told my mother that she had not quite enough money to pay it all, being obliged to keep some for her return home, and that, on glancing at it, it seemed to her that the proprietor of The Three Monarchs had added to the actual expenses too much interest for the delay of payment.

My mother was of the same opinion, and said the sum would suffice, as she should discuss the point with the proprietor, and no doubt obtain a reduction.

“Go,” said my grandmother in an indifferent tone. “I will take care of the child.”

Everything succeeded marvellously well, and I was carried off at the rather young age of nine months old, and weaned in a diligence.



## V

### MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

**I** WAS pleased, it seems, with the voyage and with the nursing-bottle. Warmly wrapped up, I slept in my grandmother's arms. In the morning everything I saw from the diligence windows amused me greatly. The movement delighted me and made me dance. Every time I asked, "Mamma?" my grandmother answered: "Yes, look, see, she is down there." At the relays I walked a little, for I already walked at that early age, and was much taken with and curious about the dogs, the chickens, and people, and was instinctively drawn to my grandmother, whom I soon grew to love fondly.

My mother, informed by a letter which my grandmother had left for her, of my being carried off, did not hasten to join us, but grandmother knew by frequent letters from the hotel-keeper at Verberie that she was taking care of herself and did not suffer, and that, moreover, she had written several letters to her husband and had received no answers.

Finally my mother decided one day to take the

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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diligence and come to us, after having borrowed a sum strictly necessary for her voyage.

The large drawing-room at Chauny, with its high chimney-place, where a great wood fire burned constantly, seemed more pleasant to me than the gloomy room of *The Three Monarchs*, and I expressed my admiration for all that it contained by throwing kisses to the fire, to the clock, and above all to my grandparents. I had room in which to trot and amuse myself, and I took an interest in everything in this large room where they received visitors, where they dined and lived. I heard a great many things which I repeated and understood. My mother did not cease to complain about the education my grandparents were giving me and on the airs of "a trained dog," that I was assuming, but she did not succeed in troubling the cordial understanding between us four—my grandparents, my nurse Arthémise, and myself.

My father, very unhappy, repenting of his foolish act, ashamed of the blind faith he had placed in a cynical impostor, had returned without a cent to his parents at Pontoise. He begged by letter for my mother, humiliated and submissive, but my grandmother replied that she would not give him back his wife until the day when he

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## MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

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should have made another position for himself and could prove that he had the means to support her. As to his daughter Juliette, she would never be given back to him.

"I adopt this child which you have abandoned and given over to dire poverty," wrote my grandmother, "and she belongs to me as long as I live."

It was at this time that my father went to live at the pretty borough of Blérancourt, three leagues from Chauny and two from Pontoise-sur-Oise, where his people dwelt. A year after he came and proved to my grandmother that he was in a position to support his wife and to fulfil the conditions she had imposed upon him before he should be allowed to take her back.

"Return and browse," said my grandfather to his daughter, laughing, as he put a well-filled purse in her hand.

I remained, of course, with my grandparents. Neither my father nor mother would have dared at that epoch to question my staying.

It was some years after this that the long series of dramatic scenes began of which I was the cause, and which occasioned my being carried off many times.

The effort made by a matured mind to recall its early impressions is most curious. We evoke them,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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and they rise before us in the form of a little person whom we succeed in detaching from our present selves, but who, however, continues to remain a part of what we have become. The image, the vision of ourselves is clear and perfectly cut in our minds when we say: "When I was a child." We see ourselves as we were at a certain age, but as soon as we particularise an event or question a fact we cannot escape from our present personality, and it is impossible to rid these facts and events from connection with it, or from their later consequences.

We should like to write of our childhood with the childish words we then used, but we cannot, and memory only suggests some striking traits, some simple phrases, which make clear the facts registered in the mind.

How many things more interesting than those we remember do we doubtless forget!

One day—it was not on a Sunday—my grandmother dressed me in a pretty white gown lined with pink and embroidered by herself with little wheels, which I had often watched her making. Later, overcome with emotion, I dressed my own daughter in this same gown.

"It is your birthday, the fourth of October, and you are three years old," said my grandmother.

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## MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Three years! these words re-echoed in my head: there was something about them solemn and gay at once. To be grown up is a child's ambition. Children create in their minds many surprising illusions. People said frequently to me, which made me very proud:

"She is very tall for her age. She looks five years old." Those two figures, three and five, were the first I remembered, and I used them on every occasion. I looked at and compared myself with children smaller than I, and considered myself very tall indeed.

On this 4th of October my nurse Arthémise called me "miss " for the first time. I can hear her even now. On that day, the first that stands out distinct in my memory, everyone who saw me kissed me. I returned my grandparents' caresses, hanging on their necks, but I remember perfectly that a number of persons made me angry by kissing me too hard. However, I allowed myself to be embraced rapturously by my nurse Arthémise, who wished to "eat me up," as she said, and also by my great friend Charles,\* who called me his "little wife."

I told him with a dignified air that now, being

\* This friend Charles was a professor in the boys' boarding school opposite my grandparents' house.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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three years old, he must call me his "big wife," which he did at once, presenting me with a trumpet, on which I began to play with all my might.

My grandparents were expecting my mother and father to dine. They always arrived late, because the road across the Manicamp prairie was so bad that they related this story to children about it: "One day a cowkeeper lost a cow in one of the ruts, and he tried to find it by plunging the handle of his whip in the mud, but he could not succeed."

One should hear this story in Picard *patois*, which gives a singular force to the words, especially when the cowkeeper turns his whip-handle in the mud and cannot feel the cow, so deeply is she buried in it.

I ran every few minutes to the front door and leaned out. I was a little afraid, for the entrance, with its four steps, seemed very high to me, but I thought I should be very useful to the kitchen-folk if I could be the first to cry out: "Here they are! here they are!"

I ran about a great deal, I even fell once, to Arthémise's great alarm, who feared I should spoil my pretty gown.

At last my parents arrived from Blérancourt.

They told a long story which I have forgotten.

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## MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

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The cabriolet and the horse were covered with mud. Papa and mamma repeated that the road was execrable. The word struck me and I used it for a long while on all occasions.

My mother wore a dark blue silk gown, caught up under her shawl. I can see her now, undoing her skirt and shaking it. I helped her by tapping on the silk and I said admiringly: "Mamma is beautiful!"

My father took me in his arms and covered me with kisses, and he also said "that I was very, very tall, and that he had not seen me for a long time—not for three months." That was the same number as my age, it must therefore be a long time, and papa looked so sad that he made me feel like crying. His own eyes were full of tears.

They sat down to dinner. My grandfather told stories which made them laugh, but I thought they would not laugh long, for whenever my parents came from Blérancourt they always ended by quarrelling together.

My father said suddenly:

"This time we will take Juliette home with us!"

I did not dare to say that I did not wish to go. I was much more afraid of my parents than of my grandparents.

"No, I shall keep her," replied grandmother.



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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"It is more than two years since you took her from us," continued my father. "If we still had her brother, or if she had a sister, I promise you that I would give her to you, but think, mother, I have only this little one."

"It is not our affair, but yours, to give her a brother or sister," my grandfather replied, laughing.

Certainly, I thought, grandfather was right. Why did not papa and mamma buy me a little sister or brother? Then they would not need to say they would take me from grandmother.

"You must give Juliette back to us," my father repeated. "I want her."

"Never!" cried grandfather and grandmother at once. "She belongs to us; you abandoned her."

Then began a scene which is easy to me to recall, because it was renewed three or four times every year during my childhood. They dragged me first to one side, then to the other, they kissed me with faces wet with tears, they grew very angry with one another, and they almost made me crazy by asking and repeating: "Don't you want to come with your papa and mamma?"—"Don't you want to stay with your grandfather and grandmother?"

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## MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

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I would answer sobbing, not realising my cruelty to my father, who adored me:

"I want Arthémise, my grandmother and grandfather."

My father was very unhappy. My mother, who was jealous of everything and everybody, suffered less, however, from my grandmother's passion for me than for my father's; but she naturally took her husband's part against her parents.

On that day, as on many subsequent days, my parents from Blérancourt yielded and grew calm. My grandmother, by much show of affection and by all manner of promises, succeeded in making them leave me at Chauny.

My father said a hundred times to me: "You love your papa, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

And it was true. I loved my papa, but not as I loved grandmother.

"Juliette must begin her education," added grandmother, "and she can do so only at Chauny. As soon as the vacations are over she must go to school."

The next morning they woke me very early. I was sleepy and rebelled. What grandfather called "the family drama" had fatigued me. Arthé-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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mise took me in her arms, half asleep, for me to say good-bye to my parents. My mother was putting on her bonnet as I entered the drawing-room, my father was wrapping her shawls about her. They got into the carriage and I waved kisses to them for good-bye.

“Above all, be good at school,” said my mother to me as she left.

One morning Arthémise carried me half asleep into the drawing-room. I wanted to be put back to bed. My grandmother said severely to me that it should not be done, that Arthémise was to dress me and that I was to go to school.

I was before the fire in the large drawing-room with its four windows, which seemed to my childish ideas immense and which has much shrunk since, and I was passed from grandmother's lap to Arthémise's. They dressed me, after having washed me, the which I did not like, although it amounted to but little, only my face and my hands, and grandfather did not even wish that they should “clean me” every day—they did not say “wash” in those days—water, he declared, made pimples on the face.

Ah! how that surgeon cultivated microbes! He could not have suffered much from the want of a dressing-room when in the army. One cannot

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## MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

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imagine nowadays how little they washed themselves in our Picardy in the year of grace 1839. They soaped their faces only on Sundays in the kitchen and their hands every morning.

My grandfather, who the barber, Lafosse, shaved every morning in the drawing-room at dawn, wiped his face with the towel under his chin when it was untied, and that was all. And yet he looked clean, his white cravat and his pleated shirt-front were always perfectly immaculate, spotted over only with snuff, which he would knock off with graceful little gestures with his finger and thumb. As to my grandmother, she was always handsomely dressed and had her hair arranged every day by the barber, Lafosse.

In the rooms of the hotels of Picardy, which had been occupied by travellers, cobwebs would be found at the bottom of the water-jug long after the epoch of which I speak.





## VI

### FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

**I**NSTEAD of one of my numerous pretty gowns, grandmother dressed me in a green frock which I did not like.

To my surprise my grandfather, after the barber's departure, did not leave immediately to go to his hospital. He looked at me and kept repeating:

"Poor, dear little woman!"

I burst into tears without knowing why.

They covered my white apron with a frightful black one. It was for school. I knew what the school was; I had many big friends who went to it, I ought to have been proud to be considered a big girl, but I was in despair. I repeated, weeping: "Grandmother, I will be very good. I don't want to go to school. Keep me with you."

My grandfather said he thought they might very well wait until the winter was over before shutting me up in a prison.

I screamed all the louder at this word, Prison. Arthémise declared, crying herself, that I was still too young to go, that it was a murder!

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## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

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"A murder! a murder!" repeated grandmother in anger. "That woman must be mad," she said to grandfather, who in his turn called Arthémise "insolent."

Here was another "family drama"; but they did not "make up" with each other after being angry, as they did with my parents.

"I shall send you out of the house!" said grandmother to Arthémise; "you shall make up your packages to-day, and to-morrow you shall return to Caumenchon. Leave the room!"

"You might scold her, but not send her off," said grandfather. "That woman loves Juliette sincerely. And, do you know what I think? She is right. It is a murder. Leave the little thing to play for a year or two more, she will make all the greater progress for it later."

"I wish her to surpass all the others at once," replied grandmother; "and then I'd like to know what you are meddling yourself with it for? I know what I am doing. Hold your tongue."

"Ta, ta, ta!" replied my grandfather, whose resistance always ended with those three syllables.

My grandmother took me to the school. I realised that it was an extraordinary event to which I was obliged to submit.

My friend the grocer was at his door. He

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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bowed to grandmother, much surprised to see her in the street "on a working-day," and told her so. She answered that she was taking me to school for the first time.

"You want to make her a learned lady," he replied.

The butcher's wife was at her desk in her open shop. She, also, ran to the door astonished, and asked grandmother where I was going with my black apron—was it a punishment? "Because for you, Madame Seron, to be out with your Juliette in the street, she must have been very bad, indeed," she added, laughing heartily.

I wanted more and more to cry again.

The large door of the school, of the prison, opened and shut behind us with a noise like thunder.

We went into a court where the large and small pupils were together. Madame Dufey, the school-mistress, appeared. She had mustaches, I thought her ugly, and she terrified me.

"I had the mother, I have the daughter now. I am delighted," she said. But her voice seemed to roar.

My grandmother made a motion to leave me. I clung to her skirts. I implored. I rolled on the floor. I was choking, and I repeated, sobbing:

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## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

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"You don't love your grandchild any more!"

My grandmother for the first time in her life remained insensible to my sorrow. She pushed me away from her. She, who had spoiled me so greatly until then, thought the moment had come in which to be severe to excess.

"Be obedient," she said to me, "or you shall remain here and not return home any more."

I revolted and answered: "I will go to my parents at Blérancourt."

Madame Dufey intervened.

"I will take her to breakfast with me and another new little pupil," said the school-mistress; "don't send for her until this evening."

She carried me off in her arms, and my grandmother went away.

Nothing had ever seemed to me so frightful as this abandonment. I felt a poor, miserable, forsaken little thing. I leaned against the wall of a corridor under a bell which was ringing, and from which ear-rending noise I had not the strength to flee, although it fairly hurt my head. I was pushed by my new companions into a dark, gloomy class-room where they obliged me to sit alone on the end of a bench.

I had a fit of despair; I cried as loud as I could. I called for Arthémise and my grandfather.



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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An under-mistress approached me and ordered me to be quiet, and shook me severely. I did not stop crying. I defended myself, and struck her because she had used me so roughly.

They carried me upstairs to a garret and left me there, I know not for how many hours. Even yet, to-day, at my age, I recall the impression of that day and it seems to me that it lasted for an infinite time. It holds as much place in my memory as a whole year of other days which followed it.

The under-mistress came at breakfast time. I had not ceased crying. If I had known what it was to die I should have killed myself.

"Will you hush?" said the under-mistress to me, striking me roughly. "Will you be good?"

This wicked woman seemed execrable to me, like the bad road of which my father had spoken. I told her so and the word avenged me. She was my first enemy. It was the first time that I had been beaten. I repeated, "Execrable, execrable!" She placed a piece of dry bread by my side and left me, saying:

"You shall obey."

Madame Dufey had forgotten me, as my grandmother learned later. I have certainly never in all my life been so angry as I was at that closed

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## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

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door. I have never found people so implacable as they were to me that day.

From crying, screaming, and knocking against the door I fell down on the floor exhausted and went to sleep.

I awoke in Arthémise's arms, who was weeping and frightened to see my swollen, tear-stained face. She had rocked me to sleep every night since I was three years old, telling me pretty stories of Caumenchon, and she kept saying now:

"They don't love you any more, they don't love you any more!"

Now, as I clung to Arthémise's neck, I grew brave again and felt a great desire to return the harm they had done to me. I said to my nurse:

"Arthémise, do you love me?"

"My little one, do I love you!" she exclaimed, hugging me.

"Then Juliette wants to go to Caumenchon and you must obey her."

She resisted. "They will say that I have stolen you and will put me in prison. I cannot, I cannot. But won't I give a bit of my mind to your grandmother! Don't you fear! for, if she has not killed you, it is not her fault."

"Juliette will go to Caumenchon, then, all alone, at once," I replied, and, as we left the

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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school, I slipped down from her arms, escaping her, and climbed the steps of the ramparts. When I got to the top I ran as fast as I could. Arthémise caught me, took me in her arms, and besought me to return to my grandmother, but as I got angry again, she walked off very fast in the direction of the village, carrying me.

When she grew too tired she put me down, and I ran, holding her hand, to keep up with her fast walking. It seemed to me that I was doing something great, that I was in the right and my grandmother in the wrong. Running, or in Arthémise's arms, I did not cease repeating the two words which seemed to me the most expressive: "It is execrable, it is a murder!"

"Yes, a murder," said Arthémise, "and they will see what they'll see!"

We walked in the mud; it was a very dark night, and I thought, if I had not been with Arthémise, how afraid I should have been of the deep ruts in which they lost cows.

I was very, very hungry, and I thought myself a very unhappy, cruelly abandoned, but very courageous little girl.

We arrived at Caumenchon, at my nurse's house. The door was open. A large fire burned in the hearth. Arthémise's mother and father looked

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## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

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older than my grandmother and grandfather, but I did not dare to say so.

They were eating their soup and they rose, frightened at seeing me.

"Why have you brought the young lady here?" they exclaimed.

"They were making her unhappy."

"Who?" said the father.

"The masters."

"You are crazy. It is not your business, it's not your business," repeated her mother.

"I am hungry; will you give me a little soup?" I asked, taking on the tone of a poor little beggar girl.

The good people both served me.

"Eat, mam'zelle, all that you want," said the mother to me.

This Caumenchon soup seemed delicious.

When I was warmed and had my fill of apples and nuts after the soup, Arthémise took me to a room with a very low ceiling and put me to bed, only half undressing me. She left a lighted tallow candle on a board, saying she would soon return to sleep with me.

The sheets were very coarse and of a grey colour. There were spider-webs and spiders that ran along the rafters; but I was not afraid of them

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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like a little friend with whom I played and who screamed when she saw one, even in the garden, on the trees.

In the room there were bars of wood through which the small heads of rabbits popped out and in.

My head burned a great deal; I heard a loud noise in my ears. It seemed to me that the little rabbits looked at me to ask me my history. I knelt down on my bed and said to them:

“My good rabbits, I have a grandmother who doesn’t love me.”

I do not know what the rabbits were going to answer me. I often wondered later, for at that moment I was caught up in my grandfather’s arms, who devoured me with kisses and carried me to the fire on which they had just thrown an enormous bunch of fagots.

Aided by Arthémise, he tried to dress me, but he trembled.

“Bad little girl, your grandmother is nearly wild with grief.”

“I don’t love her any more,” I cried. “I want to stay at Caumenchon, in the room with my friends the rabbits, and not leave my Arthémise.”

The old peasants both said to me with rather a severe air:

“Come, come, mam’zelle, be more reasonable.”

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## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

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My grandfather answered them:

"Speak more gently to her. When I think that her brother, whom she resembles, poor little thing, died of convulsions after having been scolded by his mother—I do not wish that she should be spoken to harshly."

"That is what I told you just now, sir," added Arthémise, who was very red and seemed very angry, "and I have not told you half the fear I felt when I found her in that garret. I didn't think I was speaking so truthfully this morning in calling the dragging of this poor little one to the school a murder."

"My Juliette," began my grandfather again, "I beg of you, let us return to Chauny. Arthémise's papa and mamma want her to come back to our house and she will not disobey them. Ask her if she will."

"I want to return," said Arthémise, "if Madame regrets having turned me out like a thief."

"She regrets it, Arthémise."

"I will go to Chauny, yes, but never again to the school," I said to grandfather.

"No, no, don't worry about it."

We left in my grandfather's cabriolet. I was seated, well wrapped up, on my nurse's knees. I saw the full moon for the first time. I still recall

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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my astonishment and the confused ideas I had about the great night-sun, so pale and so cold.

When I arrived at the house my grandmother was at the door, greatly upset. She had cried so much that I saw how great her sorrow was. She asked my pardon for all the horrible things endured by her poor little girl. She knew them all, having obtained the information while my grandfather went to Caumenchon, where he had felt sure of finding me.

“My darling, they put you in a garret! It was frightful,” said grandmother to me. “You did right to punish me; I will never torment you again as long as I live, my little one.”

I felt a certain superiority which inclined me to indulgence. I approved my own conduct. Perhaps that moment decided the way in which my character was formed.

“Juliette will always act like that when grandmother is bad,” I said, “and then she does not wish that Arthémise should ever be sent away like a thief.”

“Yes, yes, yes!” repeated grandmother, covering me with kisses. “Arthémise,” she continued, “you must tell me all that she said, all that she did. It was she, wasn’t it, who wanted to go to Caumenchon and who made you take her there?”

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## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

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"Yes, madame."

"She is like me, the little love. Arthémise, promise me that you will make her some day like her school. We must furnish her head with study, it deserves it."

"No, not furnish my head, not the school!" I cried.

"Really, Pélagie, you are mad; you keep on exciting the child, who has a fever. Have you never once thought of her brother's death?" said grandfather, snatching me out of grandmother's lap. "Wait until she is as strong as I am, to be able to support your exaggerations."

Grandmother turned quite white and became very gentle.

"Arthémise, put her to bed," she ordered in a calm voice. "You must tell me when she has gone to sleep."

During the following days it was impossible to prevent my relating in detail my horrible experience. I talked of it, I cried over it, and they could not make me stop. Arthémise, my grandparents, my friend Charles, were all obliged to listen to the recital, and I did not become calm until I had the sure conviction that I had made those who loved me suffer, the suffering that I myself had endured. I promised my grandmother, however,



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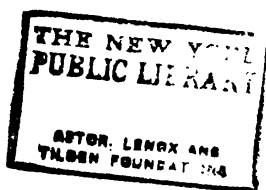
## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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that I would not relate my history to my parents at Blérancourt. Arthémise and grandmother together arranged about my going to school.

I returned there later, influenced to do so by a little friend of my own age, whom they had made me know, and who taught me how to amuse myself with pictures of the letters of the alphabet.









## VII

### I GO TO A WEDDING

**A** FEW months later, in the summer, I went to Blérancourt with my grandfather to a wedding. I had already seen a great number, Arthémise having a passion for looking at brides, but I had never participated in person at the ceremony.

A friend of my mother, Camille—I cannot recall her family name—was going to marry Monsieur Ambroise Godin, under-director of the manufacture of glass of Saint Gobain, the head office of which was at Chauny. My grandfather was to be her witness, and grandmother took the trouble to explain to me that the witness to a marriage acted in place of the bride's father, Camille having lost her own.

My joy at going to the wedding expressed itself in all manner of freaks and excessive selfishness. I neither showed nor felt the least sorrow at leaving grandmother and Arthémise. However, my absence was to be only for four days.

My grandfather, since my "campaign of Caumenchon," as he called it, had conceived such a passion for me that he stayed for long hours to-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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gether in the house, even after meals. In the evening, when I so wished it, I would also keep him at home. His friends at the club could not believe their eyes.

“He is his granddaughter’s slave,” would they say, and he would repeat: “Yes, I am my granddaughter’s slave.”

He was so tall, so big, so noisy, he talked so much that I would stare at him from his feet upward, my head raised, always laughing, and I would only play “at making faces” with him, while I often played with grandmother “at being good.”

He could not contain himself with joy at going away quite alone with me.

“It is my turn to carry her off,” said he on the day of our departure.

They tied me with two silk handkerchiefs in grandfather’s cabriolet, and they stuffed behind my back, at my sides, and under my feet a number of packages well sewn together by Arthémise, in which, folded and packed carefully, were my linen, my gowns, and everything that I might need. They did not make use of valises or trunks at that time at grandmother’s.

I can still remember my three white frocks with their coloured ribbon sashes, which had to be ironed

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## I GO TO A WEDDING

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when we arrived and which my mother showed to her friends at Blérancourt, who came to see me and to make my acquaintance. I had held my handsome Leghorn straw hat, ornamented with white ribbons, in a box in my hands and had never let it go once in spite of the jolts of the famous "execrable" road.

Having left at eight o'clock in the morning to drive three leagues, we did not arrive until two o'clock in the afternoon. One cannot fancy what the road was, going through meadows and alongside of a river which continually overflowed.

How many times since have I passed over that road, where one ran the risk of actual danger, and where the ruts were so deep that people were frequently upset.

My grandfather kept up my courage, for I did not hide my fears, by saying that Cocotte was a very good horse, the carriage strong, and that he knew how to drive very well.

My father kissed me many times when I arrived, and directly after breakfast took me by the hand to see all his friends. We went to the chateau where the Varniers lived and where I found a dear little girl of my own age, with whom I often later played at the house of her neighbour, the chemist **Descaines**, "nephew of some one whom I shall teach

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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you to know and to love later," said my father, "but remember his name now—Saint-Just."

"Saint-Just," I repeated.

I can perfectly recall the effort I made to please my father's friends at Blérancourt, and how, after having gone in quest of compliments about me, he brought back a great number to my grandfather and mother.

"How charming she is, how good she was, and how she talks!" he said.

My mother had unsewed Arthémise's packages and she ironed my frocks herself. I took part in the ironing and the hanging up, and I asked innumerable questions about the wedding.

On the morrow, the great day, all the guests gathered at the bride's house near the church. The weather was superb. They went on foot, two by two, in a long file, the bride leading with my grandfather, of whom they said: "What a handsome man he is who is acting as father."

I leaned out from the rank and dragged my mother's hand so as to see better, and, perhaps, to be better seen, for there was a row of people along the length of the cortège.

The gentleman who gave his arm to my mother was very handsome and he laughed to see her continually dragged out of file by me.

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## I GO TO A WEDDING

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All Blérancourt was there to see the fine wedding pass by, and several times I heard, not without pleasure, little boys and girls and even grown persons say:

“Look, look, it’s Monsieur Lambert’s little Juliette. How prettily she is dressed.”

Some one added:

“Monsieur Lambert is not here. He never goes to churches.”

I asked mamma why they said that. She drew me brusquely towards her and did not answer.

We reached the church. I heard the music of the organ and was going to enter, when my mother, after having spoken in a low voice to an old lady with a cap and dressed in black, who was not of the wedding party, said to her:

“Two ceremonies will tire her too much, please keep her for me and amuse her in the curé’s garden. Give her some flowers, don’t let her soil her frock, and I will come for her myself.”

I protested, I struggled, I wanted to be all the time at the wedding, but the old lady took me in her arms, passed through the crowd, opened a door, shut it, and put me down, laughing.

“You will amuse yourself a great deal more here than at the church, my darling,” she said to



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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me; "see the lovely garden and the beautiful flowers, they are all for you."

She put a cushion on the doorstep, and gave me some nasturtium flowers to suck. There was near the stalk a little bud that I found of a sweet taste. I see myself still on the doorstep of Monsieur the Curé's garden, pointing out to his servant the flowers I wanted, which she went and pulled for me.

I think I forgot the wedding a little describing to her my large garden at my grandmother's, speaking of my plums and apricot tree, of my strawberries and raspberries, when suddenly my mother appeared, very pale and excited.

"Quick, quick, come!" she said to me.

"To the wedding, mamma?"

"Yes, to the wedding."

I entered the church. The bride was near the door with the groom, all the wedding party gathered around them. They drew me to a corner where there was a large stone vase full of water, like one in our garden at Chauny. I saw that everybody was looking at me.

The curé was near the vase, the bride and groom approached, my mother took me in her arms.

"Mamma, what are they going to do to me?" I asked, rather frightened.

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## I GO TO A WEDDING

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"Be good, my Juliette, be very good, I beseech of you," she replied in a very troubled voice, "they are going to baptise you."

"No, no, not baptise me," I cried in tears.

The bride said smiling to me: "You are going to cease being a vile heretic and enter the Catholic Church."

I saw my grandfather and I cried out to him, thinking the vase full of water was the Catholic Church.

"Grandfather, come and prevent them from throwing me into the Catholic Church."

My grandfather not only remained insensible to my appeal, but looked at me very severely.

"Be still," said the curé to me, "or I will open your head and put the oil and salt in it."

These threatening words put the finishing touch to my despair, and I cried and struggled all through the ceremony of my baptism. Finally grandfather came and took me from my mother's arms.

"Juliette, you are a big girl," he said, "listen to me. I am very pleased you are baptised, your grandmother will be so happy. You were a poor little unbaptised child, we did not know it. Your father forbade you being baptised. He doesn't like churches."

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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“Yes, grandfather, I heard people say so just now.”

“So, you understand, he is not like everybody else; it is a pity he is a heathen. Your mother had great courage in making you a Christian without his knowledge. He will be furious, and I shall not be sorry to be at Chauny. Oh! my darling, my darling, may the Supreme Being protect you!”

My grandmother made me say my prayers night and morning. She often spoke to me of God, but my grandfather never spoke except of the Supreme Being; I had known for a long time that the Supreme Being was God.

There was a table for children at the wedding. It was very amusing. At the end of the repast some persons rose from their seats and they talked and talked without any one stopping or answering them; then there were some others who sang, and then my grandfather said things which made everybody laugh, and we little ones laughed also.

And then finally papa read out something in a loud voice. One of the children said it was like a fable, and they repeated several times at the large table that “it was fine, very fine!”

Papa looked pleased. They danced to the music of a large orchestra, and I danced also, turning

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## I GO TO A WEDDING

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around as much as I could. A child older than I called me Camille Ambrosine. My father was near me at the moment, amused at seeing me enjoy myself so much.

"Why do you call her Camille Ambrosine?" asked my father. "Her name is Juliette."

"I know it, Monsieur Lambert. Her name is Juliette Camille Ambrosine. Juliette is her everyday name, Camille is her godmother's, Ambrosine her godfather's. I say so, because they baptised her after the wedding. I was there. It is droll, because she is very old to be baptised."

My father shook me so violently that I screamed with fright. My grandfather and grandmother ran up to us and there was another "family drama."

My father cried out insulting things to the bride and groom. But they did not get angry. They only laughed. My father ended by taking my mother by one hand and me by the other, and leading us back to the house, grandfather coming behind us.

My mother wept, grandfather did not say a word, my father kept repeating:

"You wish that my daughter should not be my daughter."

A poor woman entered.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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“Quick, come quickly, Monsieur Lambert,” she cried, “my husband Mathieu, the thatcher, you know him, has fallen off Monsieur Dutailly’s roof and is almost dead.”

My father and grandfather left suddenly together.

My mother undressed me, made up the packages and sewed them together, and put me to bed very early.

The next morning, while my father was still sleeping, because he had watched by Mathieu, the thatcher, all night, mamma tied me with my silk handkerchiefs in the cabriolet, together with my packages, the box with my handsome white hat, and without my going to the wedding festivities the next or the third day, without my being able to wear my two other pretty frocks, grandfather took me back to Chauny.

As I left, my mother told me to be sure to tell grandmother that in spite of my father’s anger she would never regret what she had done for me, and that she ought long ago to have confessed that I had never been baptised.

Grandmother was astonished to see us returning so soon.

“What is the matter? what is the matter?” she cried.

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## I GO TO A WEDDING

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Grandfather related all the story to her, and I can hear now her exclamations:

“She had never been baptised, never baptised! My son-in-law is a dangerous madman with his democratic, socialistic ideas, without God, good heavens! Such ideas mean the end of religion, of the family circle, of the right of property, of the world!”

I still have this long phrase with all its terms ringing in my ears, from “My son-in-law is a dangerous madman,” because it never ceased for years to keep alive my grandmother’s political griefs against my father.





## VIII

### “ FAMILY DRAMAS ”

**T**HE terms Jacobite, Republican, Socialist, the names of Robespierre, of Saint Just, of Louis Blanc, of Pierre Leroux, of Proudhon, and of Ledru Rollin, pronounced over and over again with terror by my grandparents and with a manner of adoration by my father, engraved themselves upon my memory and still more in my thoughts. The “My son-in-law is a madman” began the anthem and the “without God, good heavens!” ended it; the middle part was varied according to circumstances, but the same terms, the same words were interwoven together.

My father, who was extremely eloquent, very well read, and full of knowledge, delighted and charmed my grandmother, provided he spoke neither of politics nor of religion. Being very fond of Greek, no one could relate the Hellenic legends better than himself. While still quite a small child, whenever I saw him I would make him repeat to me the stories of old Homer, and I got to know them as well as little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella.

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## “FAMILY DRAMAS”

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My father was a poet, and his verses were always classical, at least those were which he read to my grandmother, but we knew, and I, like a parrot, would repeat indignantly that he also wrote *red* verses!

How was it that my relatives were mad enough to talk politics every time they met? My grandmother was a governmental Orleanist, my grandfather a most passionate Imperialist, and it was amusing to hear him say with his lisping accent: “The emperor!” My father declared himself a Jacobite.

No one can imagine the scenes which took place between them. I can well remember my fright at the first I witnessed; I screamed and sobbed, but none of them heard me. One day (I was about four or five years old) I climbed upon the table and put one foot in a dish and with the other I rattled the glasses and plates. The discussion, or rather the quarrel, ceased immediately as by a miracle, my grandfather, grandmother, and father being convulsed with laughter.

My mother alone, of whom I stood greatly in awe, snatched me off the table roughly and was going to whip me, but in an instant I was taken from her by three people, and from that day I concluded I was very foolish to be afraid of her,



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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as the others would always protect me from her severity.

The years went by without bringing any great changes in our habits. I had become used to the "family dramas" all the more easily because, by common accord, I was not included in their sulks, and had no part in their quarrels.

I was about six years old when my grandfather, my grandmother, and my father each tried in turn to convert me to his or her own ideas. I am not exaggerating. It is true that when six and a half years old I was in the second division of the second class of my school, that I knew many things of the kind one can accumulate in the memory, which was in my case an exceptional gift. Added to this, my grandmother and my father crammed me with everything with which it is possible to fill an unhappy child's mind.

I remember that often of an evening, after dinner, while my grandfather and grandmother were playing their game of "Impériale," which they always did before my grandfather went to his club, I would prepare my books and papers as grandmother *desired*, for since my flight to Caumenchon she had never given me an order. As soon as grandfather had gone I would work with her until I fell asleep over my books.

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## "FAMILY DRAMAS"

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Seeing this preparation, grandfather would always say: "Now, phenomenon, walk to your execution, pile up your instruments of torture, and don't forget a single one!" And, going away, he would add: "They will kill the child, they will kill her!"

When by chance grandfather blamed any act of grandmother's he never addressed himself directly to her. The pronouns *they* or *one* allowed him to appear unattacked if she cut him with one of her words, sharp as a whip-lash, and to reply without answering her personally.

Whenever my grandparents were angry with each other these pronouns, *they* or *one*, were of the greatest use. They spoke *at*, not *to*, each other, and so avoided an open quarrel. They would say, for instance, during one of their sulks, which would sometimes last for several days:

Grandmother: "Will *one* be at home at such an hour?"

Grandfather: "*One* will do *one's* best to accomplish it."

At table: "Does any one wish for some beef?"

At play: *One* has this or that.

While I, much annoyed at all this, would say *one* to both of them.

Then, suddenly, without any one knowing why,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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or, perhaps because the quarrel had lasted long enough, the familiar names were spoken again: Pélagie, Pierre, Juliette; a general kissing followed, and all was over without a word of explanation.

Heavens! how dramatic, and, in turn, how funny were my dear grandparents.

As I have already said, each member of the family tried to convert me to his or her own ideas.

Grandmother would try to prove by French history that the greatness of France was due to our kings, who had suppressed the "great feudal lords."

She detested every form of feudal and autocratic systems. She loved the "First Communes," the "Tiers-Etat," the "Bourgeoisie," the moderate ones in everything—"the middle course," as she would say. She made me, at a very early age, prefer Louis XI. to Louis XII., the "Father of his People," and Louis XIII. to Henry IV., on account of Richelieu, who had overthrown the great vassals. What the kings had done for the people interested her as little as the people themselves, for whom she professed the greatest contempt. The people, the lower classes, were simply to her "those who worked at gross things, and could have no idea of anything refined."

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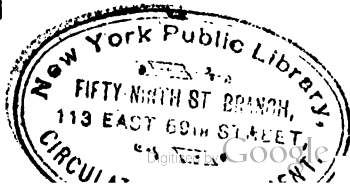
**"FAMILY DRAMAS"**

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For these opinions, expressed at school, I was often severely remonstrated with by the teachers, and looked upon with indignation by my companions.

I professed my grandmother's ideas as if they were my own, and I upheld them without saying whence they came. This came from a double feeling of pride—for I gloried in thinking differently from my little schoolmates—and also, I recall, in order not to compromise my grandmother, or, rather, to avoid having her opinions either discussed or blamed. I spoke of her with a passionate admiration, which, willingly or unwillingly, people were obliged to submit to, under penalty of blows. I strongly denied that any other little girl could have a mother or grandmother comparable to mine. They could do what they liked with me by saying that from Chauny to Paris there was not another mother or grandmother who loved their daughter and granddaughter as I was loved. Then my generosity knew no bounds, and would flow abundantly over the flatterers; usually this generosity consisted in the offering of certain sugar-plums made of apples and cherries, red and yellow, which were delicious, and of which I bought a daily supply from a grocer on my way to school, thereby obliging him to renew his stock at least twice a week.



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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These sugar-plums became later a source of reproach to me, for through them I established my dominion over the girls I liked best, probably the most greedy ones, and really corrupted them. But my domination, it is true, was also built on more honourable foundations; for, although I directed the games, and although my companions obeyed me at recreations, it was not solely on account of the sugar-plums, quickly eaten up, but because I was always inventing new games. Being both tall and strong also helped me to head the ranks. It was dangerous to measure forces with me.

My budget of political opinions was consequently thus made up: Worship of Louis XI., "the Father of the Communes," as grandmother called him; worship of Louis XIII., who had cut all the feudal towers in two; worship of Louis Philippe, "the Liberal King."

Grandfather seized every occasion to try to convince me that the Emperor had carried the glory of France on the wings of Fame to the uttermost ends of the earth, that the whirling of his sword (he would make the movement with his two large arms, one after the other, inversely, which delighted me) had terrified not only the beheaders of "Lambert's Jacobite Revolution" (this a shaft at

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## “FAMILY DRAMAS”

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my father), but had conquered the sovereigns of Europe as far as Africa and Asia.

How often I heard this speech! But, unfortunately for grandfather, it used to convulse grandmother and me with laughter.

“I have had the honour in person of serving the Emperor, and neither of you can say as much,” he would add with superb dignity (rising if he happened to be seated), “and I will not allow a word, a single word, to be spoken which might impair a hair’s-breadth his immortal, his eternal memory.”

Grandfather knew all of Béranger’s songs, especially and exclusively those that exalted his Emperor; but he made an exception of the “Old Vagabond,” which saddened him, and brought back the memory of his own misery—“the misery of my youth,” he would say—and his philosophy during that time.

I have already said what a colossally big man grandfather was, and that he drank copiously. Towards evening, speaking of the Emperor and the campaigns he had followed at Lützen and elsewhere, he usually made a mistake in the final triumphant phrase. There I had him.

“Take care, grandfather, not to upset your fine phrase.”

He would begin it, and, invariably being

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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troubled by my interruption, would end it in an emphatic manner impossible to describe, and with an outburst of inimitable pride:

“And when Larrey needed me no longer, I fought on my own account, joining the Grenadiers’ Guards, and I was always the *last* to fight and the *first* to run.”

Then I would clap my hands and cry: “Bravo, grandfather!” and he would understand by that that he had made a mistake.





## IX

### LEARNING TO BE BRAVE

**I**F my grandmother, who was not a learned person, and who acquired much knowledge in educating me, wished to make me learned, my grandfather, who as a general rule was lacking in courage, wished me to become a brave woman.

Early on Sunday mornings, before going to high mass with my schoolmates, he would take me with him to the Hospital. I was a friend of Sister Victoire, who used to aid my grandfather in his dressing of wounds and his operations. Both of them were forming me to look on human misery, they said.

I often assisted at small operations, and grandfather promised that when, by my good behaviour, I was worthy of it, I should be present at more important ones.

He showed me what he called "fine" wounds. Sister Victoire often taught me, especially if she were dressing a child's wound, how to roll and place a bandage. When I was seven years old I knew a good many things about surgery, and could be of some help to Sister Victoire and grandfather.



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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I could prepare an arm for bleeding; I learned how to bleed, myself, and how to bandage an arm after the operation, and this was most important, for, in those days, bleeding was an important part of medical practice.

During the summer grandfather would often bleed people in the courtyard of our house, near the garden, under a lilac tree of which I was very fond, and whose perfume when in flower intoxicated me. It was not a shrub but a real tree, affording shade.

People used to come and, without giving any explanation or asking for a consultation, say simply: "I have come to be bled," and they were bled on the spot.

I was sent to fetch the lancet, basin, and bandages. I held the basin, and, when the operation was over, I dug a hole at the foot of my lilac tree, and poured in the blood. Perhaps that was the reason why it was so beautiful, and why the flowers were so plentiful and sweet.

Grandmother could not look at a drop of blood. Had she been obliged to witness a simple bleeding, she would have fainted.

Grandfather would keep saying all the while to her: "I am making a brave woman of your grandchild. She, at least, is not afraid of a few drops

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## LEARNING TO BE BRAVE

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of blood. The only thing she needs now is to love war, renown, and the Emperor."

"And to be as brave as you are," grandmother would add. "I am afraid of the sight of blood," she said, "but if France were again invaded, I feel that I should fear neither Prussians nor English."

Although grandmother would laugh at grandfather's want of courage, she was very pleased that I was not afraid at the sight of blood, and she often thanked him for having kept me from this weakness. My schoolmates thought more highly of me for my courage, and sugar-plums had, in this instance, nothing to do with their estimation of me.

In the little school-world, and even in the town, some traits of my courage were told; among others this rather ghastly one:

A notary of Chauny had some time before committed suicide, and his body had been given to my grandfather, who had asked for it. He had a very fine skeleton made from it, which was kept in the garret, and was called "the notary." Arthémise was dreadfully afraid of it. I knew the "notary" very well, being always prowling about the garret to hunt for the place where grandfather hid his money, which I always found. I was passionately

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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fond of this special kind of hunting. When I had found the money, I changed the hiding-place, and would tease grandfather for days by not letting him know where I had hidden it, and defying him to find any hiding-place that would be secret from me.

When at last I told him where the money was, I deducted, according to the sum, a small percentage for my sugar-plums.

I used then to tell grandmother (when grandfather did not tell her himself, for there was never the slightest discussion about money matters between them), I used to tell her the adventure, which would greatly amuse her.

"Only," she would say, "do not take any money from what you find. I do not think it is nice. Whenever you want money for your sugar-plums, ask me for it."

"No," I replied, "with grandfather I earn it." And I really thought I had earned the money by all the trouble I had taken.

I always fancied that the "notary," whose horrid history I learned only long afterwards, helped me to find grandfather's money, and consequently I considered the skeleton my friend. So it did not strike me as unusual when, one summer evening, while some neighbours were enjoying the cool air

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## LEARNING TO BE BRAVE

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with us in our moonlit garden, my grandfather should have told me to go and fetch the "notary" from the garret, which, by the way, he would not have done himself.

Grandmother nodded approvingly, delighted at the idea that I was about to do something extraordinary, which would the next day electrify the town. She looked at me with her bright eyes and her red-gold hair shining in the moonlight. She was dressed in white, her favourite colour for herself and for me, and wore a large bunch of lilacs I had pinned on her bosom.

"Shall I go?" I asked her in a low tone. "They will be frightened—they do not know what the 'notary' is."

"Yes, go," she said, laughing.

I went up to the garret to fetch the "notary."

He was very large, and I was very small. I put his head under my left arm, and with my right hand took hold of the banister. The moon was shining through the window. I can still hear the noise his bones made as they rattled on the stairs behind me.

I entered the garden, and threw the "notary" on grandfather's knees. There was a general scream. The children shrieked, and hid their heads in their mothers' laps. The mothers cried:

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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"Oh! what a horrible thing! It is frightful! Monsieur Seron, take it away!"

Grandfather enjoyed the joke, and laughed with all his might. One woman fainted, and, while grandmother was throwing water on her face, he took the "notary" and placed it at the foot of the stairs. He did not dare to take it up himself.

We found this out afterwards, because Arthémise, coming into the room which I shared with grandmother, when we had gone to bed, cried out:

"Madame, Mam'zelle, the 'notary' has got downstairs alone. He is at the foot of the staircase!"

Grandfather was obliged to get up and put it back in the garret, but he made Arthémise go with him carrying a light.

My grandfather—who would believe it?—had very poetical tastes and was fond of pigeons. We had hundreds of them, and he had made me share his passion for these pets, and every day after breakfast he and I would feed them. They flew all about us, just as later in life I have seen them do on the Piazza di San Marco at Venice. We slipped on large linen blouses with hoods, and the pigeons would cover us entirely, head and shoulders, arms and hands. They clung to us and picked at us. The flutter of their wings and their

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## LEARNING TO BE BRAVE

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cooing delighted me, and seemed like music. When we moved, they followed us with their pretty, mincing steps.

Grandfather and I were very fond of our pigeons, but grandmother, finding that they multiplied too fast, had the young ones taken from their nests, while we were absent, by a man who sold them, which grieved us very much. I heard of it through a little schoolmate, whose mother had bought some, and who told me one day that she had eaten some of my pigeons.

I scolded grandmother, who asked me if I would rather have eaten them myself.

“Most certainly not!”

Grandfather calmed me by saying that we could not possibly keep all that were born, and that grandmother did quite right, provided she would only take the young ones, and leave us the fathers and mothers. She promised this, and kept her word, and the old ones became more and more tame.





## X

### A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

**O**N October 4th, when I was eight years old, my father obtained grandmother's approval to take me to Blérancourt for a three weeks' visit, until All Saints' Day, for she felt sure of having directed my ideas according to her way of thinking by that time. We had never before been separated for so long, and were much grieved—I less than I thought I should be, and she more than I feared.

My father loved me so tenderly, so passionately, he took so much trouble with a few words, spoken here and there, to make his ideas interesting to me; he treated me so like a woman, desiring, I could feel, to overcome the repugnance with which my grandmother had inspired me concerning his democratic, Jacobite, free-masonic, anti-religious opinions—"without God, oh, heavens!"—which, like a spoiled child, I had often expressed to him, that this journey with him seemed to me a most serious thing. I fancied that his companionship during the next three weeks would do more toward

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## A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

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drawing me to him, and taking me from grandmother, than absence itself.

"Jean Louis," said my grandmother to him, after kissing him warmly, as he got into the carriage where I was already seated, "bring her back to me the same as I give her to you. You owe it to me!"

We were starting. My father answered, laughing:

"I do not promise any such thing."

I heard grandmother cry out:

"Juliette, stay!"

A strong cut of the whip started the horse.

I did not turn back my head, but burst into tears. My father did not attempt to console me, as my grandmother would have done. She could never bear to see me cry.

He kissed me violently, repeating: "My daughter, my child, my own—at last, at last!"

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My mother welcomed me in her usual cold manner. My father's growing passion for me, to which he now freely abandoned himself, grandmother's absence removing all restraint, seemed to her exaggerated.

"It would seem as if your child were a divinity on earth," she said to him one day before me.



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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“Better than that; she is my daughter!” answered my father, and added, laughing: “I should not be far amiss in thinking her a daughter of Olympus.”

My mother detested witty sayings, which she classed in the same category with teasings, and this pun on her name did not please her. Ever since my father’s sojourn at Brussels, she called him nothing but Monsieur Lamber, although she still used the familiar *thou*.

“Oh! Monsieur Lamber, your speech is in very bad taste,” she answered.

On the contrary, it seemed to me very clear, and I often laughingly repeated it to father when he was instructing me about Greece. He had found my mind open to antique subjects, and I would say to him:

“Am I not the daughter of Olympus?”

My father would always take me with him on foot, on his visits round about to his patients. He taught me to drive his rather spirited horse, and we would drive in his two-seated carriage over good or bad roads to see the rich and the poor, especially the latter.

I told him of my studies in history, and of grandmother’s opinions, which I shared.

“See, child,” he said to me, “you and your

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## A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

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grandmother have every reason to admire Louis XI. and Louis XIII., because you both think that under their reigns the nobles were cast down; whereas, they only changed their own condition *vis-à-vis* to royalty. They became courtiers; they were domesticated by the kings, but they remained much as they were towards the bourgeoisie and the people; they kept the same distance between themselves and their inferiors as the sovereigns had kept with them. Before the Revolution equality did not exist anywhere. That alone began the great work. Let me tell you of Saint-Just, whom, of all the makers of the Revolution, I understand the best. He is to me a friend known and lost. I will take you to see his sister, and you will see how sweet and charming she is. You will amuse her. She speaks so affectionately of her brother that he, my Saint-Just, will cease to be to you the beheader and monster that your grandparents have represented."

"Oh! papa, I shall never be, like you, the friend of that dreadful Saint-Just, or that horrible Robespierre—never!"

"Don't be too sure. You have as yet heard only one side of the question. You hate all injustice, you love the poor and the humble people; you will therefore absolve those who have eman-

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cipated them, even at the cost of violence. You see, there is no moderation in politics. They are like a swing," he said with a smile. "You are thrown twice up to the extreme heights, and you pass the middle line only once out of three times."

"Well, papa, I am for the middle place—the middle, above all. Like grandmother, I hate extremes."

"Juliette, you are not serious?"

"But, papa, you began while smiling in your talk about the swing."

"Well, I am sorry, and I wish to tell you, once for all, that the great Revolution itself has not done sufficient work."

"Oh! papa, for shame!"

"No. Listen to me. The nobles had oppressed the people—you know in what manner, you know all about it, for you speak as one well informed. Your grandmother and you judge the 'great ones,' as they should be judged. But that is not everything; you must not stop on the road. Since the nobles have been cast down, other oppressors have sprung up, just as hard, just as tyrannical, to the poor and humble ones as the former were, and these are neither as valiant nor as fine as were the feudal lords, the knights of chivalry. The 'great ones' of to-day belong to

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## A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

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the upper bourgeoisie class. We require a second Louis XI., a second Richelieu, and another Revolution, to destroy this new feudal system. We have found the new formula, my child, to open, at last, the reign of absolute justice, and we shall achieve it by a Republic, and by the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. There will be no colossal fortunes on one side and complete misery on the other. Suffering and justice will be equitably distributed."

"That will be a magnificent time, papa, but will it ever come to pass?"

I had been so often told that my father was an absurd and dangerous dreamer that I was doubtful of the perspicacity of his judgment; and still his words sank into my heart, because I found them generous and tender towards the unhappy ones of the earth.

It is easy to explain the fascination such simple theories would have for a child's mind. Such conversation made a deep impression. My father was of the type of those who were called later on "the old beards of 1848." An idealist, without any notion of the probabilities of reality, my father thought that his political conceptions were absolute truths. As sentimental and as romantic as was my grandmother, he fostered illusions about

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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political life resembling those which she fostered about individual life.

However, some of his conceptions seemed sublime to me in my childhood.

My father gave a place to nature in all that he said to me, for he sermonised me continually. The doctrine of Christ, which had given the formulas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, was mingled in his mind with an exuberant, poetical paganism, and this amalgamation furnished his discourses with pompous arguments on charity, on the laws of social sacrifice, and on the divine attributes of human heroism. My childish imagination, already initiated in researches for what grandmother called "superior things," was dazzled and fascinated by degrees.

My father's professional ability served marvelously well in placing all things of which he spoke within my mind's reach. He simplified questions to such a degree that he succeeded in leading me to converse with him, and in making me feel that he took an extreme pleasure in our conversations.

This made me very proud. He was prudent in all that he said to me: "I do not say this to influence you; you are still too young for me to enforce any ideas upon you; I will teach you later," etc., etc. I listened to admirable sonorous phrases,

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## A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

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but could not judge of the gaps in their practical demonstrations, or of the possibility of the application of his ideas. I was touched by his devotedness to the suffering classes, of whom he often spoke.

I had, however, an instinctive feeling that the violence of my father's character, of which he gave too frequent proofs, might make him, like his friend Saint-Just, cruel towards the fortunate ones of this world, as his good heart made him kind to the unhappy. And I wished to know whether I had guessed rightly. It was a hidden place in his heart to discover.

"I agree, after all, that your Saint-Just loved the humble and poor as much as you do," I said to my father one day, "but you cannot prove to me that he was not cruel, that he did not kill."

He answered:

"Action changes a man's nature; you must judge Saint-Just from his intentions."

"Hell is paved with them, papa," I said.

I had discovered what I wished to know.

"In spite of what your grandmother says," he added, "I do not love Robespierre, because he was born a Jacobin. One should not be born a Jacobin. A person may become one, but it is necessary first of all to have been a humanitarian.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Ferocity is permissible only to defend one's principles, or one's country when it is in danger. In order to legitimatise it, there must be provocation."

He had told me about the leaves of the sensitive plant, and, when he said something which displeased me, I would reply:

"Enough, papa, I fold myself up!" Then he would call me sensitive, and we would cease talking.

Sometimes it seemed to me that he actually probed in my brain as with a red-hot poker, as grandmother, also, too often did. I felt great pain in my temples, and would say:

"I can't listen to you any longer. I feel ill."

My father took a great journal, *La Democratie Pacifique* of Victor Considérant, to which he was one of the first subscribers. My grandmother did not read newspapers. She heard the news from grandfather, who read the *Gazettes* at his club. I thought my father admirable because he read four great pages every day, and knew at Blérancourt everything that was taking place in the whole world.

Later, in recalling what I had suffered in my childhood and the first years of my youth, I remembered that at that time it seemed to me that the "walls" of my brain were too light to support the pressure of the mass of ideas which my

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## A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

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father and grandmother strove alternately to force between them. I felt these "walls" tremble at times and threaten to fall in.

I often played with the chemist's daughter, Emilienne Decaisne, great-niece of Saint-Just. I thought her kind and charming, but my father said she was not sufficiently proud of her great-uncle. He often made his friend Decaisne angry—"the too lukewarm nephew of Saint-Just," as he called him.

I went one day to see Saint-Just's sister, Madame Decaisne, the chemist's mother, and Emilienne's grandmother. She lived at the extreme end of that beautiful quarter of Blérancourt called the Marais, where the lines of plane-trees perfumed the place in the spring, and where the ruins of the Louis XIV. château are so fine. Madame Decaisne inhabited a well-preserved house of the eighteenth century, looking on a garden, surrounded by high walls.

She was a very old lady of extreme elegance, tall and slight, dressed in the antique fashion. She made pretty curtsies, and raised her gown with her two hands very gracefully when she walked in the garden, and, as my father said, seemed always about to dance the minuet.

In her large drawing-room, furnished with Louis



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XV. and Louis XVI. furniture, which my grandmother had taught me to discern and to admire, and which my father thought old-fashioned and horrible, as he cared only for modern furniture—the furniture of “progress” made of mahogany and ebony—Madame Decaisne seemed to me like an apparition.

There lived with her in her house (although her son did not like it, my father told me before we went in) an old friend, the Chevalier de Saint-Louis, dressed also in old-time fashion, who was called simply “Monsieur le Chevalier.”

Madame Decaisne and the Chevalier had both remained thorough Royalists and Legitimists, detesting the “Egalité branch,” but faithful to the memory of Saint-Just, of whom the Chevalier had been the friend. “In spite of the crimes they had made him commit,” said Madame Decaisne, “she and the Chevalier had not ceased to love him.”

The Chevalier amused me very much because he glided and skipped over the waxed floors, and kissed Madame Decaisne’s hand when he left her only for an instant. He spoke of Saint-Just with affection.

“Monsieur le Chevalier,” my father said, “is it not true that Saint-Just still strikes you as having been, above all, a humanitarian and a poet?”

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## A THREE WEEKS' VISIT

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"Yes," he replied, and added: "Besides, he, who was so intelligent, so superior, so full of hope for the great future, expiated his errors by his death. One should have seen him in the political storm to be able to understand how so good and so noble, but too fanatical, a man could at certain moments have thought that 'blood was necessary.'"

The "necessary blood" remained in my mind after I heard the Chevalier use the phrase.

I spoke to grandmother about it on my return to Chauny, and she was not as indignant as I supposed she would be.

"When the kings protected the people from the nobles, they caused necessary blood to be shed," she said to me, "and the kings grew greater in spite of their crimes. If the men of the Revolution had shed only the enemy's blood at the frontiers, and that of traitors—of which there were a few like the Messieurs de Sainte-Aldegonde, who during the invasion called the invaders of France, 'Our friends, the enemies'—if, I say, the men of the Revolution had not killed for the desire of so doing, they would have been absolved, but they sacrificed innocent persons to their ferocity, and they will never be forgiven. Your father is one of those who, like Saint-Just, wishes to purify

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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society more and more, after having shed 'necessary blood.' He is one of those humanitarian Jacobins, people more cruel than the wickedest, who think they have the right to be implacable under the pretext that they have been tender-hearted in their youth."

But, to return to Saint-Just's sister: She took a fancy to me. Living with my grandparents, whom I still considered young, I adored old people. Madame Decaisne one day read to me some of Saint-Just's poetry. It was about a little shepherd leading his flock to pasture, and the unhappiness of roses because they had thorns. She threw so much feeling into the reading that I shed tears, and thereby won her heart and that of the Chevalier.





## XI

### A PAINFUL RETURN HOME

**T**HE three weeks passed so quickly that I had written very seldom to my grandmother, not daring to speak to her about the conversations with my father, or of the impression they had made upon me. I said to myself it would be better to make my confession slowly. In like manner, as my father had enlightened me with regard to his ideas, I would enlighten my grandmother concerning mine. Moreover, I had not been converted. Saint-Just's ferocity was absolved, for reasons I could not quite remember; my father, so good, so benevolent, was capable of becoming cruel after "provocation"—I remembered that word—all this aroused a great revolt in me, and overthrew my first enthusiasm.

There had been several "family dramas" on my account. I occupied too large a place in my father's life, and my mother could not overcome that unfortunate jealousy which caused us all so much sorrow.

My father loved her passionately for her beauty,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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which should have given her every right to believe herself loved; I looked at her with admiration, and bestowed upon her a sort of worship; and my grandparents were very proud of her. But she had spoiled our mutual affection by her coldness, and destroyed our confidence in her love for us, because she constantly doubted our love; none of our assurances would convince her, whereas a careless word, spoken by chance, without any real intention of wounding her, became to her a proof of all she imagined, and then she became so unjust it made one believe she was hard-hearted. Whereas, in truth, her undeserved, cutting reproaches, her insinuations, her accusations, were only a sort of despair at not being able to force us to love her as she wished to be loved, and at not having won a larger amount of our affection precisely on account of that conduct which made us love her less.

My father wished to take me back to my grandmother himself. She opposed his wish, and it was she who accompanied me home. The pain she caused me during that short journey recalled to me my first day at school.

We were both mounted on the same donkey, and had not gone very far on our route when, the animal becoming fatigued, my mother got down.

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## A PAINFUL RETURN HOME

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She talked as she walked along, while I, very proud, held the reins and did not wish to think of anything else.

My mother questioned me in a wearisome and annoying manner about my grandmother's love for me. She made me impatient, and, not being accustomed to control myself, I answered two or three times:

"Mamma, I beg of you, leave me alone; you torment me more than the priest at confession."

"Has your grandmother ever told you she would find a husband for you and give you a great deal of money—a *dot*?" she asked me suddenly after a silence.

Having got up early, with my head drowsy, and having been tormented for half an hour, I answered unfortunately:

"Yes, grandmother will give me as large a *dot* as she can. Are you satisfied?"

My mother struck the donkey, which was also half asleep. I was jolted so unexpectedly that I fell off on the opposite side from my mother on a heap of stones.

The shock stunned me. I was blinded by blood. I called "Mamma!" and found she was no longer by me. I got up, took my handkerchief and tried to collect the blood on my forehead; my flowing

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tears enabled me to open my eyes. I looked for her, but a turn in the road prevented me from seeing how far away she might be. She had disappeared in order to punish me. I thought she had abandoned me, alone and bleeding.

I started to run as fast as I could. My mother was waiting for me. The sight of the blood which covered my face, and which came from a wound under my hair near my temple, and which grandfather said in the evening might have killed me, did not touch her heart. She raised me from the ground by my belt without getting off the donkey, which she had remounted, placed me on her lap without saying a word, holding me tightly with her left arm while she drove the donkey with her right hand, tapping its head with the reins.

I was very uncomfortably seated, and suffered much from my position, but I did not complain. I thought only of getting home, of seeing my grandmother, whom I would never leave again.

I did not cease sobbing, and the people who met us could not understand my evident despair nor my mother's impassibility.

My grandmother, informed of my coming, was at the window with Arthémise. They ran to the door on seeing us. When my grandmother saw the state I was in, she took me into the drawing-

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## A PAINFUL RETURN HOME

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room, overcome with grief. She could not kiss me, there was so much clotted blood on my face.

She had begun to question me, anxiously, when my mother, who had taken the donkey to the stable followed by Arthémise, came like a bomb into the drawing-room, and began again the eternal "family drama" so angrily that the quarrel became more and more passionate. Finally I, crying in despair, was taken with a nose-bleeding, which my handkerchief, already saturated with blood, could not stanch, and I was literally covered with blood.

I could understand nothing of my mother's and grandmother's explanations, they were so mixed up, and, besides, my head was aching so badly.

I had certainly done wrong to say what I had said, and I felt myself miserably guilty, but because of the thoughtless words of a child, did I deserve to be left in such a state?

"So," said my mother, "you have promised to give Juliette as large a *dot* as you can, and, doubtless, your fortune also? Am I, then, absolutely nothing to you? Do you disown me, your own daughter? I don't care a fig for your money, but the humiliation of being treated thus by you is something I will not bear."

When I think of my distress during those not-to-be-forgotten minutes, I still feel the effect of



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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it, so convulsed was I in all my being, and so keenly did I realise my mother's cruel jealousy.

My grandfather appeared at one door, Arthémise at the other. He looked at me, listened for a moment, and understood what was taking place. I threw myself in his arms, crying, my face bloated, swollen, and bleeding, in such a misery of abandonment and feeling so forsaken that my grandfather's heart was convulsed with pain.

"You are, each of you, madder, more wicked, more ferocious than the other," he cried, in a furious voice. "Your quarrels, your suspicions, your idiotic, imbecile explanations crush every atom of maternal feeling in your hearts. You will kill the child, do you hear? you will kill her! Olympe, do you not remember that your son died of convulsions after one of your quarrels? Look, both of you, at your only child. Don't you feel any pity for her, shrews that you are? And then you will dare say to me that you love Juliette! I have half a mind to take her from you both, and to fly with her to the ends of the world. Just look at her!"

And grandfather, who was fond of dramatic scenes himself, placed me standing on a chair. My sobs redoubled, and I must have been pitiful to see, for my mother and grandmother threw them-

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## A PAINFUL RETURN HOME

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selves upon me, frightened. Grandfather pushed them aside, and put me in Arthémise's arms, who again began her song: "It is murder!"

This phrase made me remember, with singular clearness, my adventure at school, and I cried out to grandmother:

"This time I will never forgive you!" My lips trembled, my throat was on fire, and I was shivering.

While grandfather washed me, grandmother made up the fire, weeping. When I was warmed and calmed, my grandfather, with an anger and hardness I had never seen him show before, flew at my mother, seized her by the wrists, and, shaking her, said:

"It is not enough that her father and grandmother should over-excite this child's brain enough to make it burst, but you must go and give her such a cerebral commotion that it is enough to make her crazy."

And as my mother, in excusing herself, began again to accuse me——

"Hold your tongue, and take care!" cried grandfather, in a threatening voice. "I thought until to-day that you resembled my poor mother, too passive and too 'browsing.' Don't recall my father to me by your ferocious hard-heartedness!"

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If you go on like this, I will make you kneel and ask your daughter's pardon."

"You are breaking my wrists," she said, "let go of me. I have the right——"

I thought then that grandfather was going to beat her. His voice became so terrible that I saw my grandmother tremble.

"Do you repent of the wrong you have done to your daughter?"

"Yes!" she said, falling on a chair, overcome by her father, whom alone she feared, and who was never violent, never showed firmness except to her.

Poor mother! she suffered, herself, to such a degree from her morbid passion of jealousy that, when she was stricken with paralysis and confided her mental tortures to us, we heartily forgave her for those fits of anger.





## XII

### A VISIT TO MY GREAT-AUNTS

**I** WAS ailing all winter. I had attacks of intermittent fever, followed by the measles, with delirium.

My father and mother came in turn to help my grandparents take care of me. For a week they all feared not only for my life, but for my sanity—fears which re-established for a while perfect accord between them.

My father, talking one day at my bedside to grandmother, who was accusing her daughter of being responsible for my illness, said:

“It seems to me, mother, that you, too, deserve reproach in this respect, from what my father-in-law tells me. As to Olympe, I assure you she is more unhappy from her suspicions than those whom she suspects. Her jealousy is not her own fault; it is a malady. If you will look at her during her fits of anger, you will see that she has already certain tremblings of her head, too characteristic, alas! Do not forget that her paternal grandfather died of paralysis, which is, perhaps, the explanation of her unconscious cruelties. You

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must take care of Olympe, mother, rather than blame her. I, also, have a great defect in being too violent, and it comes to me from an affection of my heart, an inheritance from my father."

My father expressed these words so gently, so sadly, that I at once forgave my mother, with whom I had until that moment still been angry, and I was most unhappy to hear that my father had a disease of the heart.

During my delirium my grandfather had no difficulty in discovering the cause of the tension of my little brain, overheated by the struggle to understand the contradictions between my father's and grandmother's ideas. I was endeavouring with all my might to make the ideas agree, and could not succeed, which tormented me. In my fever I did nothing but talk of politics and socialism.

"She must escape from both of you for a time," he said to my father and grandmother, "and I am going to accept her great-aunt's invitation to her."

My grandmother's half-sisters, Sophie, Constance, and Anastasie, lived with her mother at a country-seat in the environs of Soissons, at Chivres. They led a monastic life, having, all three, refused to marry.

Since their father's death they had, no one knew

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why, desired to know me, and this seemed all the more extraordinary to my grandparents because they had never taken any interest in my mother.

A friend of my grandmother's having spoken to them about me, they said to this friend that if grandmother desired me to be their heiress, instead of one of their mother's cousins, to whom they were somewhat attached, she must let me go and visit them alone every year during the vacation season, in July and August.

My grandfather said to himself that such a complete separation from my father and grandmother would put my brain "out to grass," as he expressed it, and would do me immense good. He induced grandmother to write to her friend that she would send me at that time to visit my great-aunts.

The prospect did not please me at first. I was so weary, so weak, that I asked only to be allowed to dream, lying in the large drawing-room beside grandmother, who read or embroidered without speaking to me.

My brain was hard at work during my convalescence. It appeared to me that I was making a great journey in life, and that I discovered many new and serious things every day.

I had taken no interest in money affairs until then, except for the purchase of my sugar-plums.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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But was it not money which had been the cause of the great quarrel on my return from Blérancourt? Was money, therefore, a very great, very important thing? And now, again, I heard it spoken of *apropos* of these aunts for whom my grandparents cared so little, and of whom they thought so ill.

This money, which had made my mother so cruel to me, was now going to make my grandparents more kind to my great-aunts.

I discussed these questions very naïvely with myself, although my mind was wide awake with regard to other things; but there was never any question of money affairs between my grandfather and grandmother. My grandfather kept his own accounts with his patients; my grandmother took care of her own fortune.

I questioned grandmother about the necessity of my being my aunts' heiress, asking her why she considered it so important that I should have money.

"It is not for the money itself," grandmother answered, "that your grandfather and I desire that you should be your aunts' heiress, but for a certain satisfaction it would give us, and because it would be creditable to them. You know, for I have told you so several times, that my father kept

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my mother's *dot*, and that he was obstinate in making the keeping of it a condition of my marriage. If my half-sisters desire to repair the wrong they have done me, I approve their conduct; if my step-mother, now very old, wishes to die without remorse, I understand it. That is why I desire that you should play a part in this scheme of reconciliation, more worthy of our family than the unworthy machinations of former times. It is not a question of money, but of a triumph for your grandfather and myself, should your aunts make you their heiress. You see, Juliette, there is nothing more noble than to repair one's wrong by a righteous act. Try to help in bringing it about."

I had a mission. I was going to aid in the triumph of justice, and in that of my grandparents. I was still very weak, incapable of any great effort, for a fever brought on by growing pains hindered the progress of my convalescence; but the great rôle of ambassadress extraordinary—"something like a diplomatic work of Monsieur de Talleyrand," said grandfather, not mockingly, but solemnly—that was worth thinking of.

I had, besides, some experience to guide me. How many times had I not reconciled my grandfather and grandmother, as well as my parents at Blérancourt, or all of them together? While still



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very small, I had often played the part of arbiter. I gave my personal opinion on all matters and in all discussions.

I should probably have been insupportable had not my grandparents, both of whom were very gay and witty, kept up a spirit of fun between us which banished all gravity, even in questions of quarrels, instead of preserving a tone of stiff, solemn, and stately importance, so that, when I succeeded in hushing up a quarrel between them, it was usually because I had made them laugh.

My father, also, submitted to this course of action on my part, but it exasperated my mother, who would always say:

“I will never admit that a joke should get the better of a grief.”

Might it not be probable that my great-aunts would resemble my mother in character? Ah! in that case I would resign my mission very quickly, so much the worse for the inheritance! I would write at once to be taken home.

“My sisters cannot be dull,” grandmother said to me. “Having remained unmarried, they certainly must have kept their original characters.”

The great day for my departure for Chivres arrived. What an excitement, to be going to pass two months away from my father and grand-

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## A VISIT TO MY GREAT-AUNTS

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mother, and with old people whom I had never seen, and on whom I must make a favourable impression, "or else suffer the humiliation of being sent home," said grandfather.

I was going to be shut up in a sort of cloister. My three great-aunts, their mother, and a servant whom they had had for twenty-five years, lived alone in an old house, situated in an enormous domain surrounded by high hedges and walls. This was the description my great-aunts' friend gave to us of "the convent."

My grandfather was to take me, with my packages sewed up by Arthémise, as far as two leagues beyond Coucy-le-Château. Grandmother told me to look well at "the monstrous feudal towers of Coucy." Marguerite, my aunts' servant, would await us at the village, her native place, at her mother's house on the Square opposite a cross. She would meet me there with my aunts' donkey. I was to dine at her mother's cottage, after which we would leave Coucy, taking cross-roads, and would arrive at Chivres late at night.

I had been much sermonised by grandmother before I left, and on our way grandfather continually joked me about my "*mission à la Talleyrand*."

"Your old aunts must die of ennui," he said to me; "you will amuse them, and they won't return

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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the compliment, if I remember them rightly. Sophie will teach you Latin, she knows it very well; you will use some of it with Marguerite in the kitchen, perhaps also with the donkey, and you must bring back to me what remains of it. Mind you don't forget, for I have great need of it."

Grandfather left his carriage at the entrance of the village, at the only inn of the place, and as we walked along he continued his jokes.

I laughed so at all the nonsense he said to me that, when I saw Marguerite and the donkey to which I was to talk Latin, I forgot to cry.

Grandfather kissed me quickly, more overcome than myself. After giving Marguerite instructions concerning my health, and the care to be taken of me, he handed her a complimentary note for my aunts, and then flew off so rapidly towards the entrance of the village where he had put up his carriage, that when I turned, after caressing the donkey, I saw no sign of him.

We were to have gone to the inn, on leaving the village, to get my packages to put on the donkey, which had a basket hung on his saddle, but a servant from the inn brought them to us.

My heart was a little heavy at this sudden separation, but my stomach was very empty, and I

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ate with a good appetite for the first time in many weeks.

Marguerite's mother had announced my passage to the whole country-side; all the urchins of the place were grouped around the cross. I smiled at the little girls and boys, who followed me into the house to see the "young Miss" who looked like a little "Parisienne."

My way of speaking, which had no Picardy accent, struck them all. Neither my grandfather, who was from Compiègne, nor my grandmother, which was more extraordinary still, had the least *patois* accent.

The little chits gathered around the long oaken table at which I was eating, and made me talk by asking questions. I had brought with me some sugar-plums, a necessary cargo for a great journey to an unknown country. I distributed my sugar-plums with the greatest success. I drank to the health of the troop, who had cried: "Vive! the young Miss!" and, a little intoxicated with the bracing air, I half remember having made a speech to the young people, a very moral one, concluding by saying one could never love one's grandfather and grandmother enough, or one's father and mother.

"Why is it that you don't say first that we

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should love our mother and father?" asked one of the little peasants.

"Oh! that's as you like," I answered, thinking it would require too many explanations to be understood.

Marguerite, who took a fancy to me at once, had her share in my success. The "young Miss" already belonged to her.

I mounted Roussot, who intoned at his departure a song so odd for a donkey, with such a ludicrous search for harmony, that I began to imitate him, which encouraged him to continue.

My new friends, the children, burst out laughing. They followed me for a long way, and, on the thresholds of the houses and huts, which became farther and farther apart, their mothers saluted me, waving their hands, wishing Marguerite and her "young Miss" a good journey.

I tasted the sweets of popularity. It was due to my sugar-plums, to my Parisian accent, and to my perfect imitation of the donkey's bray.

Marguerite made me think of Arthémise. She was full of admiration for everything I did, for all that I said. She answered all my questions with the desire to please me, she said.

Roussot found me a light weight. He trotted along briskly, while Marguerite, holding the bridle,

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## A VISIT TO MY GREAT-AUNTS

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walked beside us with long strides. I thought the sunset was beautiful; it shone over an immense plain, inundating it with its rays, and its reflection illuminated the sky long after it had set.

We journeyed on under the brilliant stars, not along a straight road, for we took many turnings, which by degrees brought us near to Chivvès.

The rolling country was so pretty that it pleased me exceedingly, and I should have liked to gather all the flowers which a bright moon showed me along the sides of the road.

"There are flowers in plenty in the close, Mam'zelle Juliette," said Marguerite. "There are bachelors' buttons and poppies in the wheat, and daisies around the wash-house; you shall pick as many as you like. You are not so cityfied, after all, if you love the beautiful things in the fields."





### XIII

#### I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

**M**Y three aunts and my grandmother's step-mother, whom I afterwards called great-grandmother, appeared before me, standing together on the steps, as soon as the front door was opened. For a moment I stood aghast, for my grandmother's three sisters, unlike her, who always wore such handsome gowns, were dressed as peasants, just like their maid Marguerite, in cotton jackets, cotton skirts gathered full around the hips, cotton kerchiefs, large grey linen-aprons with pockets, and they wore caps on their heads!

The youngest of them, aunt Anastasie, cried out, "Good-evening, niece! and welcome here!" in a clear, gay voice, and with the pretty accent of Soissons, the native place of her mother, who had returned thither with her husband, and from whom she had inherited it, doubtless. Marguerite took me off the donkey. My two other aunts and my "great-grandmother" had such high-bred manners that I concluded they must have disguised themselves to amuse me.

I went indoors, while Roussot was led off to the

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## I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

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stable, braying loudly, I accompanying his song, which sent my aunts into fits of laughter.

The ice was broken; I had my supper, I chattered, and then fell asleep. It was about eleven o'clock at night.

At noon the next day I was still sleeping, and aunt Anastasie became frightened, and awakened me. They had been waiting an hour for breakfast.

Marguerite appeared, a parcel of clothes in her arms, and said to me:

"Now, Mam'zelle Juliette, you must dress as a peasant. We will put all your fine clothes away in a cupboard, and then you can enjoy yourself without fear of spoiling anything."

So I tried on jackets and skirts belonging to aunt Anastasie, who was the most coquettish of the three! And such coquettishness! Coarse print gowns, faded, and washed out; and the old-fashioned patterns of them all, and the way they were cut! I was at last equipped in a horrible fashion. The skirt, being too long, was pulled over the waist-band, and bulged out all around my waist; the apron, rolled up in the same way, came nearly up to my chin. I pulled the sleeves up above my elbows. My cap I pushed back as they wear them in Bordeaux, so that it just rested on my long, braided hair.



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It was too funny! I nearly fell over from a chair on which I had climbed to look at myself in a mirror. I screamed with laughter, for it is impossible to describe how absurdly I looked thus transformed. Grandmother would have cried out in holy horror—she who was scandalised if my dress was a little soiled, or my hair “*à la quatre-six-deux*,” as she would say.

I entered the dining-room with complete success. I did not know where to place my elbows, because the rolls of my skirt quite covered my hips. I was forced to raise my shoulders, and great-grandmother, after much laughter, declared that, when breakfast was over, the hem of the skirt must be cut off and the skirt made shorter, and all the rolls taken away, as they deformed my shoulders, and might make me a hunchback.

“I will look droll as much as you like, dear, adorably rustic aunts, but not hunchback,” said I.

I was less of a child than these five women, including Marguerite, who ate at the same table with us. They were interested in little nothings; my manner of talking, my funny ways, my assurance and important air were taken in earnest whenever any “great questions” were discussed. My aunts were delighted to feel their minds in constant movement under my impulsion.

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Monsieur de Talleyrand had found his equal, and I thought how in my turn I could chaff grandfather.

After breakfast I went out into the garden with aunt Constance, and no sooner was I on the steps than I saw Roussot coming along for his daily piece of bread, his "tit-bit," as we used to say. As soon as he saw me he began to bray, and I answered. Outside the gate we heard the village children laughing at Roussot's extraordinary music, answered by another song.

I went to visit the donkey-stable, Roussot following. He seemed quite at home in it, walking about and showing us around. Then I went to the poultry-yard, and saw the cow and her little calf, the rabbits, the ducks, the fruit-storehouse, the cellar, and the large garden. It was so large that it took me a long while to look, one by one, at all the fruit-trees, laden with fruit, and to discover at the end a nice little covered wash-house, in which I promised myself I would often dabble.

I came back after a while, and little aunt Anastasie—she alone in my mind deserved this endearing epithet—showed me the lovely flowers she had made during the winter to trim the altar, which was always raised in the garden, on Corpus Christi

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Day, and was admired by the whole country-side. The large gate was opened wide only on that day.

Aunt Sophie showed me her room, which she always cleaned herself, and into which not one of the household, still less an outsider, not even Marguerite, was ever admitted.

To see me in aunt Sophie's room seemed an extraordinary and astonishing event, and the whole bee-hive was in commotion. Marguerite told me afterwards of the sensation created by my hour's stay in aunt Sophie's room.

Her room was much more elegantly furnished than our rooms at Chauny, only the walls were simply whitewashed. Opposite each other stood two old chests of drawers with fine, highly polished brass ornaments; on the other side of the room stood a very handsome bed of carved wood, without curtains, but covered with a pale-green coverlet embroidered in fine wools, the design of which formed large bouquets of shaded roses, surrounded with dark-green foliage, which pleased me so much that when I left she made me a present of it.

The two large windows were draped with small pink and green muslin curtains, trimmed with guipure, and sliding on rods. There were books on shelves and on the chests of drawers, and on a very handsome consol table were several vases filled

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## I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

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with field-flowers, so artistically arranged that I at once said to aunt Sophie:

"You will teach me, won't you, how to make these lovely bouquets of field-flowers?"

A large tree in the garden outside threw a cool shade in the room; near one window stood a table, on which were scattered, in graceful disorder, books, papers, a bowl of flowers; and everything, in fact, that was needful to study, to read, and to write in quiet, and amid pretty surroundings.

I thought of grandfather's speech:

"Your aunt Sophie will teach you Latin, which you can afterwards translate to Marguerite, to the donkey," etc.

"Is it true, auntie, that you read Latin books?" I asked.

"Oh! yes."

"Does it amuse you?"

"Very much."

"I would like to see one."

She showed me a pretty little old book with gilt edges, which enchanted me, and told me that it was Virgil's "Bucolics." She read me a passage and translated it, and I said to her:

"Why, it is just like the stories of old Homer, which papa tells so well. In the seventh canto of the Odyssey, old Homer, in speaking of the four-

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acre garden of Alcynous, enumerates the fine trees which yield such beautiful fruit, and which Ulysses so admires. Your Virgil is like my Homer, but he is not so old."

Aunt Sophie kissed me.

"Why! do you know Homer? Do you love him, and like to talk of him?"

"Certainly, I do, aunt Sophie; that and the history of our France are my favourite studies. Whenever papa comes to Chauny he recites to me a new canto of the 'Iliad,' or the 'Odyssey.' I make him begin over again those I like the best. You can question me, aunt Sophie; I know the names of all the gods and the heroes of Greece. Ancient Greece and ancient Gaul are my two passions. But I shall not like your Latin. I hate the Romans, whose greatest man was Cæsar; he put out the eyes of our Vercingetorix; the Romans pillaged Greece and then——"

"We shall get on very well, Juliette," said aunt Sophie, "and I will teach you to love Virgil, who is the most Greek of the Latin poets. I will teach you, as he has taught me, to love Nature, and to find pleasure in a country life. I will repeat to you the cantos of the 'Æneid,' as your father has told you those of Homer."

"But, aunt Sophie, I am not so ignorant as you

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## I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

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suppose. Papa has taught me to know and to love Nature: I will love it with you, but not with your Latins. I cannot bear them."

During the next few days the chief thought of my great-grandmother, of aunt Constance, and aunt Anastasie, was to know what aunt Sophie had said to me, and what her room was like. Marguerite even questioned me.

On leaving her room, aunt Sophie had followed me into the dining-room; then, having taken her mother into the drawing-room, which was up a few steps, and seated her near the large window, out of which she could see the field and her daughters at their work, she gave her a trumpet to call us in case of need, and then said to us all:

"To work!"

A skirt, shortened by aunt Constance, was put on me, and each of us, with a sickle in our hands, proceeded to cut fresh grass and clover for the cow and for Roussot.

My aunts showed me how to use my sickle, and I was really not too awkward. Marguerite made small heaps of the grass we cut, and carried them to the stable in a little low-wheeled cart, which she drew herself.

They made me wear my cap more forward, and I overheard my aunts, who were already dear to

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me, discussing a book which they were in turn reading aloud in the evenings. It seemed to number many volumes, for they had been reading it for the last eight months, and still it was not yet finished. I asked aunt Constance the name of the book, and she told me that it was "The History of the Italian Republics," by Sismondi.

My aunts spoke so clearly of things, in such simple language, their ideas, clearly and precisely expressed, were so easily comprehensible to me that I became much interested in their conversations.

I can see them now, on their knees, cutting clover, and judging of facts, of actions, of ideas of men in a way that kept my curiosity on the alert. The conversation was about Savonarola, a sonorous name that at once struck my memory, and of his mad attempts to transform society. Many of Savonarola's ideas resembled my father's, but I did not dare to say so, nor to uphold any principles contrary to those which my aunts seemed to defend. I might, perhaps, do so at some later time. I could already have said my say in this conversation had I wished, and I was inwardly grateful to my father for having opened my mind to the comprehension of politics.

So, while cutting away at my clover, I thought what true ladies, clever and cultivated, were my

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## I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

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aunts under their peasant garb. They looked as if they wore a disguise, but the expression of their faces, their way of speaking, and all their gestures, were distinguished and elegant.

"We are boring this child; she is cutting the clover as hard as she can so as not to fall asleep," said Anastasie.

"You are mistaken, auntie," I answered, "I am listening. Papa wants to make a Republican of me, grandmother is determined that I shall be a Royalist, and grandfather tries all the time to make me love his Emperor. So I am delighted to hear about the Italian Republics. I learn things I never knew before, and I love to be instructed."

Aunt Constance was the only one who would not use the "thee" and "thou" to me. She was very witty and quizzical, her eyes and lips expressed great fun, and she pretended in a laughing way to have an exaggerated respect for my very youthful self.

"You are a young lady like few others, I must confess," said aunt Constance, suddenly laying her sickle down by her side.

Marguerite came past them and said that sufficient clover was cut. My aunts and I went to the foot of a tree, and when we were all seated side



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by side in the shade, I answered aunt Constance in the same tone she had taken :

“ I am, indeed, a young lady like few others, and this is not the end of my being so. I promise you, auntie, that I do not mean to stop half-way.”

“ What do you mean by that? ” asked aunt Sophie.

“ You can easily understand,” I answered, in a serious, grave, mysterious tone—for I felt that I must initiate my dear great-aunts in my secret thoughts, that they were worthy of my confidence, and that I could repeat to them what my grandmother was always saying to me—“ you can easily understand that I am not going to live all my life at Chauny, that I shall go to Paris and become a woman unlike everyone else.”

“ Are you going to be a celebrity, dear? ” asked aunt Sophie.

“ How long a time do you propose to take before you render your family illustrious? ” asked aunt Constance.

“ Forty years,” I replied.

Aunt Constance and aunt Anastasie burst out laughing at my answer.

Marguerite, leaning on her little cart, was listening, open-mouthed. “ It is just possible that it may be,” she said.

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"Well, Juliette, I promise you I will live to see it," said aunt Sophie, solemnly and seriously.\*

\* My three aunts all lived till past eighty years of age. Anastasie, the youngest, said to me in her last illness : "My niece, pray do not defend me from death. I do not like your epoch."





## XIV

### SOME NEW IMPRESSIONS GAINED

**I** SPENT two full months at Chivres. I learned from Marguerite and aunt Constance all about the care to be given to animals, all about fruit-trees from aunt Anastasie, who also taught me how to make very pretty artificial flowers.

One of the most enjoyable hours in the day was the hour when aunt Sophie would give me a lesson in her room.

I used to sit in a pretty arm-chair, painted white and covered with some fresh pink-and-green material. Aunt Sophie was embroiderer, upholsterer, painter, carpenter, and locksmith all in one, and it was she who had painted and covered her arm-chairs, having first embroidered the material. We sat in similar arm-chairs, without our caps, which we took off; we chatted by the pretty table covered with books and papers, and it was I now who made the lovely nosegays of field-flowers.

Aunt Sophie placed before me a large sheet of paper, and gave me a pencil, and, every quarter of an hour, that is, four or five times during the

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## SOME NEW IMPRESSIONS GAINED

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lesson, she would say: "Sum up in a few words what you have just heard."

It is to aunt Sophie that I owe my tendency to condense, to simplify, and to store in my memory a very closely packed supply of knowledge.

She would talk to me, too, of the Paganism of modern times and of the danger of its encroaching upon divine things. She would read me a short Latin sentence, repeating the words several times, and making me say them over mechanically; then she would explain them one by one, making of them living images, so that I was delighted with the poetical interpretations. I understood everything that she explained to me. "Juliette," she would say, "let us look at what we can see in things, and seek for what is not visible."

"Oh! auntie, let us look at once for what is not seen. I can find out for myself, even away from you, what is visible."

Aunt Sophie explained to me that life exists in everything, even in what are called inanimate things. Every object had for her its own peculiar voice or sound. She taught me to distinguish, with my eyes closed, the difference between the sound of wood and of metal. She had a crystal slab on which she placed balls of various substances, and

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with a little hammer she would play the strangest airs.

“If things can so speak to us,” she would say, “I am convinced that flowers look at us. They all have faces which express something, and most of them have perfumes which penetrate to our very souls. We can the more easily understand what is called the spirit within us, by smelling the perfume of a flower. I will explain that to you more fully a few years hence.”

Ah! the fairy-like, well-remembered hours I spent every morning with my aunt!

I was talking to her one day about the wind and she said: “I do not like it.”

“Why?”

“Because the voice of the wind is made up of borrowed sounds which it gathers on its way. Wind annoys me, makes me sad or puts me to sleep just like those authors who borrow ideas from others.”

I feel that I am badly expressing all that my aunt Sophie told me, that I speak less clearly and less originally than she. I was only eight years old and yet I understood all she said. She must have made herself much clearer than I can. I lived with aunt Sophie a life of dreams and a life of action at the same time. Every action

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## SOME NEW IMPRESSIONS GAINED

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accomplished by me when near her, seemed to have a fuller significance. If I watered a plant I seemed to be caring for it, and delivering it from the horrible pains of thirst; if I cut clover with a sickle, I seemed to be receiving a present from the earth, and felt that I must be grateful; if I plucked a ripe pear, I was easing the overloaded tree, which seemed to lean and offer it to me, and still did not let it drop. If I killed any harmful insect, I fancied I was doing, in person, the work of Hercules, and could hear around me a kind and approving murmur.

When Roussot and I sang our duet we were really having a musical discourse.

I could not stay indoors. The rain-drops, big and little, called me out:

Since my illness, a very strange thing had taken place in my young brain. I fancied that I had just been born or had been born over again. All that grandmother, who hated Nature, and thought it cruel and false, had taught me—which teaching had been already greatly counteracted by my father's influence—had so entirely disappeared from my mind that I could not conceive how it had ever existed there.

All that grandmother believed in on this earth was love. "The passion of loving alone brings

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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us near to superhuman truths," she said. "All things that can be reasoned about, and proved, and weighed, come from what is inert and material, and ought therefore to have no place in our souls. It is a kind of knowledge that may be left, like cumbersome luggage, by the side of the road, that leads us to the Beyond."

Grandmother seemed to me at that time really to be the incarnation of what people said of her—"romantic." I loved her just the same as before; I paid her in my heart the same tribute of affection I owed her, and which she deserved, but I was much more attracted by the minds of my father and of aunt Sophie, and felt great curiosity about them. I loved Nature as aunt Sophie loved it, and I was interested in the past history of Nature according to the Greek and Latin poets, and I suffered with my father for the misery of mankind, for the wretchedness of the poor and the unfortunate in life.

"Aunt Sophie," I asked her once, "why is it that all that you show me which is so divine in Nature, hides from me that God who is so great and so far off, and whom grandmother taught me to adore? Why is it that I care no longer for the sufferings of 'misunderstood souls'?"—this was one of grandmother's sayings—"and that I care

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## SOME NEW IMPRESSIONS GAINED

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a great deal more for the welfare of poor miserable wretches? ”

“ It is just because God is so great and so far off that you are too little to understand Him,” answered aunt Sophie. “ When you are as old as I am ”—she was forty-six and grandmother a little over forty-eight—“ everything will find its place in your understanding, especially if the basis of what you know is built on a sure foundation. You must be able to touch with your feet the ground you walk on. Mother Goose certainly said that before I did. You must love intensely all that lives while you live. I am a child of Nature; I live in it and for it. Your father loves mankind, and wishes it to be happy, because he, himself, is so human.”

At Blérancourt I had adopted the habit of writing down in a little book a summary of the conversations I had with my father. Aunt Constance, having found the book in one of my pockets, was always teasing me about the depth of my reflections. I let her laugh, but, when in possession of my “ Notes of Blérancourt ” again, I added to them my “ Notes of Chivres,” and the serious thoughts exchanged with aunt Sophie.

I kept this little book, written in small hand-



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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writing which only I could read, until I came to Paris, when, to my great regret, it was lost, but the sense of what was therein written has never left my memory.





## XV

### THE END OF MY HOLIDAY

**M**ARGUERITE was appointed to show me the environs of Chivres. I put on my pretty frock, and for a week, the harvest being over, seated on my friend Roussot's back, I roamed over the lovely valley through which runs the river Aisne. I saw the whole country between Soissons and Chivres, and around Chivres itself.

Marguerite took me to see the Dolmens, the Druid stones, of which aunt Sophie had told me the history and legends. On the evening when I returned from my visit to the Dolmens, I refused to wear my peasant clothes, and appeared at table in a white frock, with a wreath of mistletoe and laurel-leaves on my head, dressed as a Druid priestess of my Gauls.

Grandmother and my father did not write to me for fear of tiring me. Had they known that aunt Sophie was teaching me Latin and other things beyond my age, they would have grieved at having been parted from me for so long a time and for no benefit to my health, as they would have thought.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Now, I was in perfect health because I worked in the fields for hours every day; because I went to bed and got up early, and because I slept alone in a large room, where a distant window, protected by a screen, was left open all night; whereas at Chauny I slept in grandmother's room, and she had the habit of reading in her bed, by the light of a great lamp, which she often forgot to blow out, and which many times smoked all night.

I had recovered all my strength; my recent "growing" fever had left no trace whatever, except a slight increase added to my height. I looked fully ten years old, and was exceedingly pleased at the fact.

I was almost perfectly happy. To the success of my mission this pleasure was added: that, although I had been sent to please my aunts, it was they who had pleased me.

My mind was more at work during the time I spent with my beloved relatives than at any other moment of my life, insomuch that I asked questions on every subject, and that I pondered over all the "whys and wherefores," and all the answers given me. What a happy holiday, and what perfect rest as well!

Ah! if only grandmother and my father were living at Chivres with my aunts and great-grandmother and Marguerite, not forgetting Roussot,

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## THE END OF MY HOLIDAY

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the cow and the calf, etc., etc., I should then be perfectly happy!

I was certainly very fond of grandfather, and my mother's beauty, as I looked at her, effaced any trace of unjust scoldings and of the sadness I felt at seeing her so frequently pain both my father and grandmother; but I could not but think that my mother and grandfather could very well live at Chauny quite contentedly, while my four aunts, my great-grandmother, Marguerite, father, grandmother and I would be so unspeakably happy living at Chivres.

The time for departure, however, drew near. I had only a few days left. Grandfather had written (grandmother not being as yet in harmony with her sisters) that he would come for me on the following Monday, at the same place where he had given me into Marguerite's care. This was Friday.

Neither my aunts nor myself dreamt of prolonging my stay. We felt that it might compromise the possibility of any future visits.

At my age, a year seemed a century. With their gentle philosophy and their equal tempers, my aunts told me that July and August would come quickly around again, and that now that they knew me, they could both think of and talk of me.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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"You will leave us with perhaps more pain than we shall feel at losing you, Juliette," said my teasing aunt Constance, when I was lamenting our separation, "but you will as certainly sooner forget the pleasure of our society than we shall forget the pleasure of yours."

"You are naughty," I answered. "You know very well it is just the other way. Have I left off thinking of my father and grandmother, and wishing they were here? I have, perhaps, talked of them too much; well, that is how I shall talk of you."

Tears were shed at my departure, and aunt Constance was not the least sad of them all; but I was too grieved to bring it up to her notice.

Aunt Sophie had prepared some short exercises which she made me promise to go over for a quarter of an hour every day. On every Sunday I was to know seven new Latin words, without forgetting a single one of those learned before. I was to return to Chivres with two hundred and fifty Latin words in my mind, placing them as I chose, as all the first Latin words aunt Sophie had taught me were words in common use.

The day I showed my father the exercises prepared for me by my aunt, he exclaimed:

"Why! this is a bright thought! Your seven

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## THE END OF MY HOLIDAY

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words put together have a general meaning. They form a little story, and each word is necessary in daily life."

"Good-bye, good-bye, dear aunts!" I waved kisses to them until I was out of sight, for, a fact commented on by the whole of Chivres, my three aunts and great-grandmother were standing outside the big gate, so as to watch me as far as the end of the village.

Marguerite was crying and blowing her nose; Roussot most certainly understood the situation, for he held his head low and made a noise resembling a moan.

I tried to console Marguerite by talking fast, but did not succeed.

"There's nothing to be done, Mamzelle Juliette, you are going away, and I can think of nothing else. The only thing that will help me to bear it until next summer, when you are coming back, is that now that the ladies have told me that the money is to be yours, I shall work harder and economise more than ever."

I again found myself in full popularity on entering Marguerite's village. The whole band of children was waiting for me.

Alas! I had no more sugar-plums. Why, yes, I had! my dear grandfather had brought me a

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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large parcel of them. His joy at seeing me look so full of health quite touched Marguerite. I thanked the dear woman for all her care of me, and begged her so warmly to assure my aunts of all my gratitude, that she said:

“Perhaps, after all, you do love us as much as we love you.”

And she added, turning to my grandfather: “you will take great care of her, Monsieur?”

From Marguerite’s tone, when she said these words, you might have supposed that it was she and my aunts who were giving me to grandfather, and not he who was taking me home.

After we had eaten some luncheon at Marguerite’s home, I kissed and kissed the old servant, I kissed Roussot, who I thought moaned more sadly under my embrace, and jumped into grandfather’s carriage.

I turned around to look back as long as I could. Marguerite waved her arms, the children shouted: “Come back soon!” and Roussot went on braying.





## XVI

### AT HOME AGAIN

“WELL?” asked grandfather, as we drove away, “has everything really gone off well? Have you made a conquest of your aunts and great-grandmother? They dote on you, don’t they? Answer! they really dote on you?”

“Grandfather, they love me dearly; they really do. And I love them; you can’t think how nice and amusing they are, and good and tender, and not solemn a bit.”

“But do you think they realised what a wonderful niece we sent them?”

I remained unembarrassed, being accustomed from my earliest days to the broadest compliments. I answered simply:

“Yes, grandfather, they found your granddaughter wonderful.”

“You must tell us everything in detail. Your grandmother and I wish to know all that happened hour by hour, day by day, word for word, all, in fact, and even what you thought.”

“And dreamed?” I asked. “What an effort of memory I shall have to make!”



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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"We have been so lonely. Your father came once a week to talk you over with your grandmother."

"And did the usual 'family drama' happen every time?"

"Of course, but it always ended happily, because when your father rose to take leave, either your grandmother or I would always say: 'Dear me! how we must love that little woman, to be always quarrelling about her,' and then we all said good-bye with a laugh."

"I shall have to take seriously in hand the matter of reconciling my grandmother's and my father's ideas concerning me," I answered so gravely that grandfather began to laugh mockingly.

"Nonsense!" said he, moving so suddenly that he dropped the reins. When he had picked them up, I grew angry.

"Who reconciled my aunts and my grandmother, if you please? Was it not I?"

"Beg pardon, my Emperor!" answered grandfather cracking his whip, "I forgot that we are all only simple soldiers."

Then a rain of amusing jokes began. I was seized with grandfather's contagious gaiety. He laughed so heartily and unaffectedly at his own

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## AT HOME AGAIN

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jest, that no one could help laughing with him.

Both my father and mother had come from Blérancourt to welcome me on the evening of my return; all were loud in admiration of my tanned face and hands, and were delighted to see me plumper, as well as much taller and stronger.

My mother, I suppose, was pleased, although she did not show it in her manner. I perceived that in her presence I should have to reduce considerably the report of the success of my mission, and I took good care not to repeat Marguerite's saying: "Now that the ladies have told me that the money is to be yours, I shall have more courage to work and economise." I knew from experience that it was best in any conversation with my mother to leave out the money and legacy question. Marguerite's saying had touched me only in so much as it proved her love and devotion for me.

The moon shone clear, and as the weather was very dry, my father and mother did not fear the fog on Manicamp Common, so they started for home that same evening after dinner, having arrived much earlier than I.

The story of my transformation into a peasant the day after my arrival at Chivres, of the way my

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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aunts worked out-of-doors, greatly amused my relatives during dinner. It was supposed then they had remained cockneys, for at Chauny they were always called "the fine ladies."

"They really used to be most affected," said grandmother. "They took no interest in household matters and would spend their time in the drawing-room, reading, doing fancy-work, and quarrelling among themselves."

Just then I made a most unlucky speech which very nearly provoked the inevitable "drama."

"Well," I said, "I am glad to say that they have improved in every way. They take part in all that goes on, and I never heard a single quarrel or dispute during my two months' stay; it was a change for me."

"You are really very amiable to us," replied my mother in a sharp tone. "If it was you who brought about this miracle, you can repeat it here," said grandmother, who had no idea of losing her temper.

"Why, Juliette, how can you have such excessive, scandalous, dreadful, criminal audacity as to dare to imply that you have ever heard a single quarrel or witnessed a single dispute in your family either at Chauny or Blérancourt? In truth, you baby, your health is only skin deep; you

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are still suffering. Go to bed, my child, go to bed."

You should have heard grandfather say all this in his shrill, lisping voice. He was perfectly serious and solemn, and irresistibly funny.

"I was wrong, I was wrong, a hundred times wrong, Sir Grandfather," I answered, "I humbly beg pardon, I repeat. I collapse!"

I imitated grandfather's tone so perfectly that even my mother smiled.

When my parents had left, grandmother instead of questioning me as I had expected, said kindly:

"Go and rest, darling, Arthémise will put you to bed, while we have our game of *Imperiale*. Tomorrow, and the following days, you shall tell us all you have said, all you have done and seen."

And so it was, for days and days I talked of nothing but Chivres. Grandmother was quite surprised that I should have so enjoyed myself in a place where she would have been bored to death.

During the last remaining month of my holidays I was much oftener in our large garden than in the drawing-room reading stories with grandmother.

A gardener was in the habit of coming three times a week, and, guided by Arthémise, he ar-

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ranged the garden as he pleased. It was I now who looked after all the crops, and from that time he obeyed my orders. I had some autumn sowing done, and I began to read books telling about the culture of vegetables and the raising of fruit. The garden was admirably stocked with both. I chose one of the empty rooms for a fruit-store and had some shelves put up by the carpenter. Grandmother took no interest in these things; so she let me do as I chose with the gardener and Arthémise. During the whole of that winter we had ripe fruit on the table every day, and my grandparents were much pleased.

I suffered greatly in not having a room to myself and being obliged to share grandmother's. I tried to keep it neat and clean, but grandmother upset it as soon as it was tidy. She cared nothing for the elegance of the frame, although she was so particular about the portrait, that is, herself.

When I was kept indoors by rain or bad weather, I tried to put a little order into the arrangement of the house. I ransacked certain drawers and cupboards, and left them more orderly than they had ever been before. To the rag-bag with all the rubbish! to the poor all that we could no longer use! Neither grandfather nor grandmother made any objections, for they were convinced that my ac-

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tive life at Chivres had benefited me much, and that, provided I could create for myself a field of physical activity, they could all the better, and with scarcely any danger, set my head to work.

My grandparents' house underwent a complete change in a fortnight. Fresh air, which was never allowed to enter the hermetically closed rooms, now blew in abundantly, and even broke a few windows. Arthémise and I scrubbed and rubbed and beat from top to bottom. I discovered in the garret some old vases and china, rather soiled by our dear pigeons, which I filled with prettily arranged flowers, and placed about the rooms.

Grandmother at last took some interest in the beautifying of our house. She would sometimes help us—not to clean, for that would have spoiled her beautiful hands, but to arrange.

She opened a cupboard for me on the first floor, and we found it full of beautiful gowns of dead grandmothers. Out of these I made table and bureau covers, to which grandmother added embroidery.

Grandfather enjoyed this luxury. The house seemed much more attractive to him. I owed it to his influence that grandmother allowed me to have a room to myself on the first floor, next to

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Arthémise. A communicating door was made between the two rooms.

I selected from the garret, which was full of furniture, the pieces that I liked. I stole from grandfather a pretty Louis XV. chiffonier, in which I had always kept my dolls and their clothes. So far as I was able, I copied the arrangement of aunt Sophie's room.

I discovered a large table on which I set out my school books and papers, and many times grandmother left her beloved drawing-room and brought her embroidery to my room while she gave me my lesson.

I would sometimes send her away, saying, "Grandmother, I want to collect my thoughts."

This made her smile and she would sometimes tease me by staying; at other times she would go, saying to herself that, after all, for a child to think, even of nothing as it were, was still thinking, and that in my father's mind and her own, their chief desire, as they had said when I was away, was to create in me an individuality, even supposing that individuality might be contrary to their own ideals.

These desires of thinking out my thoughts seldom occurred, however, and I was at that time so active and full of play that grandmother was

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not at all distressed at my occasional love of solitude.

My dreams were explained later on when I began to write poetry.

Thus my dual character was formed. I have always remained very full of life when with other people ; yet at times I am eager for solitude.







## XVII

### I BEGIN TO MANAGE MY FAMILY

**I** ENDEAVOURED most seriously to put into practice what I had once told my grandfather, who had laughed at me, namely: to make my grandfather's ideas concerning me agree with my grandmother's. I fancied myself born to conciliate. I talked of grandmother to my father, and still oftener of my father to grandmother, having more opportunities for so doing. I sought in every way to make them more indulgent and loving towards one another, and I perceived how a word said at the proper time, and thrown into ground already prepared, could bring forth a good harvest.

I determinedly stood between them in their quarrels. I forbade any "talking at" each other and greeted such speeches with blame and derision. I forced any misunderstanding between my beloved grandparents to be explained away instantly, and I would not allow ill-humour. I proved on the spot what had caused either the misunderstanding or the rancour. I pleaded a double cause and won it.

"You surely could not mean that, grandmother?"

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## I BEGIN TO MANAGE MY FAMILY

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You have not understood, grandfather. It is very wrong of you to imagine such an unkind meaning! Say you are wrong. You know very well that . . . ” With these few sentences, interrogative or affirmative, which I repeated one after the other, very quickly, and also through tenderness and entreaties, I managed to smooth over the quarrels, and by this means we all three kept sadness at bay for a few days.

Whenever I had cleared away all the black clouds, I fancied the sky would always remain serene.

You can imagine how important I felt myself, and how I persevered in my peace-makings. My reflections were certainly absurdly profound in the circumstances, but they taught me to study my grandparents' characters with kindness, and by that means to turn my arguments to good account. I noted certain words spoken when one or the other was absent, and I noticed that whenever I could add to my wish of convincing them favourably: “She or he told me so the other day,” my triumph was complete. At times and according to circumstances, I ventured some slight embellishments, but I do not think any one could blame me, when the feeling which dictated my little exaggerations was so praiseworthy.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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I learned that no matter how young we may be, we can be kind and useful to those we love. I was born with such a cheerful disposition, I was so naturally happy, that I might easily have become selfish, had I not, from my childhood, thought a great deal about the happiness and peace of those belonging to me, and especially because of their tendency to make themselves miserable, and to disturb their lives by scenes of violence. I formed in my heart an intense desire to care always for the peace and welfare of others.

At nine years of age my character was formed, and I have since then perceived no essential change in my intercourse with others. My first interest in life was centred in my relatives, later, in the people of mark with whom I lived; and I have developed my own personality only so far as it could serve my ardent wish to love, to admire, and to devote myself to others, or to be useful to any cause I espouse and uphold, so long as I deemed it worthy to be fought for and upheld.

My real vocation, in fact, would have been that of an apostle preaching the "good word" and reconciling men among themselves. I was much more ardent in play hours than in study, because I was busy amusing my schoolmates or settling their quarrels. I hated anything clannish, and I

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## I BEGIN TO MANAGE MY FAMILY

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especially sought after those girls who stood apart from my group. I led in everything, but I was never captain. When it so happened that there were two camps, I called myself the chief staff officer of the two commanders, and I rode from one to the other giving advice to each.

I was much fonder of being guide than captain, and it was usually owing to me that there were never any defeats, and that neither side got the better of the other. What unmixed joy I used to feel when, after some particular play hours in which I had given myself a great deal of trouble, I was surrounded by a group of little girls saying to me: "What fun you have made for us!"

On rainy days we were obliged to content ourselves in a barn, in which no running about was possible, so I amused my young companions by talking politics to them. I demanded absolute sworn secrecy concerning the things I was going to tell them, and of which they had never heard in their own families. Their ears were wide open to hear my stories about King Louis Philippe. These were the stories my father never lost an opportunity of relating to grandmother in order to make her angry.

At the time of which I speak so very few newspapers found their way into the country, that

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politics and the government were topics rarely discussed at table by grown people, so I acted as a newspaper, and informed my little friends of what was going on in the world.

My father, whenever he saw me, gave me cuttings from the *Democratique Pacifique*, and kept me so well posted that events often justified my speeches, and I was asked for "the news."

We all made up our minds that when we were grown up, we should have a hand in government, and would state our opinions frankly, and that our future husbands should be obliged to be interested in politics.

I read every book I could lay my hands on, and among them I found a volume on the Fronde which delighted me, because the women of those days played leading parts. I told my "disciples" about the book, and, to my delight, they soon came around to all my ideas. I easily persuaded them that we were all "Frondeuses."

How proud we felt at having ideas of our own, and to belong to a "secret society," for we bound ourselves not to reveal to anyone the opinions we shared. And then, who knew? Things were going so badly that perhaps one day France might have need of our devotion and our capacities, and we loved France. We fancied ourselves to be "the

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## I BEGIN TO MANAGE MY FAMILY

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staves of this dais which covered the sacred reliquary of our country." One of the girls discovered this metaphor and was much applauded.

These childish things, at which one can but smile, made us very patriotic little persons, however—ready, as we thought, at least, to give our lives for France. We no longer learned history in our former way. Everything in it interested us. We spoke of *our* France, at such and such an epoch, and we discussed at length the consequences of a reign, a fact, a victory or a defeat.

If a professor had heard us, he would certainly have found in our conversations—often very silly, to be sure—elements of emulation to make young pupils love studies which usually bore them mortally.

However, after a time we grew tired of the Fronde; we should be obliged to find something new. I promised to do so. The Easter vacations were at hand, and I was to pass them at Blérancourt.

When I arrived there, it so happened that one of my father's friends, a Fourierite, came to visit him. I had heard of Fourier, of whom I knew but little, while I had for a long time been familiar with Victor Considérant and the *Democratie Pacifique*.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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My father's friend explained to him a complete plan for a phalanstery, wishing to interest him in it, and I remembered what was necessary for my purpose, in order to make use of this new idea with my schoolmates during our future recreations, for we were always eager for new things.

After the departure of the Fourierite my father explained to me all that I wished to learn, and I soon understood what a phalanstery was. But my father said, and I agreed with him, that, being only nine and a half years old, I was still incapable of understanding the depth of Fourier's theories, his social criticisms, and the elements of reform.

But he talked to me of Toussenel, and delighted me with stories taken from his *L'Esprit des Bêtes*, a book that had just appeared, and about which my father was enthusiastic. We had long conversations about my pigeons, whose habits I had studied a little, but I knew nothing of their intelligence and feelings. Ah! what interesting things my father, through Toussenel, revealed to me concerning bees and ants. In our walks, when we came upon an anthill, we would lie down flat, and I saw and learned many things about the tiny workers, those that laid eggs and the warriors. What my father objected to was that there should be a queen among the bees and the ants.

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## I BEGIN TO MANAGE MY FAMILY

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"You can't get over it, papa," I said, "and though you may talk for ages on ages, you cannot change the government of bees and ants."

All these histories of animals were like fairy-tales, and I took the greatest pleasure in them, saying: "Tell me more, more!"

However, my father found in the study of these creatures, despite their royalism, proofs of the beauty of his own doctrines. Making everything revert to his desire to induce me to love nature and detest *bourgeoise* society, he tried to persuade me that the associations, the community of work and of fortune, as practised by the bees and the ants, would be the means of adding more generous perfection to human lives than mere selfish individualism.

"Besides," he said, "at this epoch the chain which has enclosed man in a middle-class position during a century is expanding, and will soon break."

My father was fond of their rather cabalistic formula. I used it on all occasions, and I also thought I heard the breaking of the chain of "middle-class positions," and was glad.

When I returned to Chauny I spoke to grandmother of Fourier, of the phalanstery, and of *L'Esprit des Bêtes*, of the royalism of the ants and



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the bees, which was in sympathy with her ideas, but at the idea of the communism of work and of fortune, which we approved, she laughed merrily.

“Your father needed only that, poor fellow, to complete him! To receive inspiration from insects, to take lessons in social organisation from animals—it is really enough to make sensible people laugh,” said grandmother. And she related to my grandfather and to my friend Charles, with her mischievous wit, the news of Jean-Louis Lambert’s new social theories, developing them and putting them into action in such a droll manner that, in spite of the effort I made to defend these theories, I could not help bursting out laughing with the others.

“You see, my darling,” said grandmother to me one day, “I like ‘middle-class positions,’ and find it very pleasant to occupy one, and do not wish at all that they should be broken, for I myself hold such a position. The best trick I could play your father would be to give him a ‘middle-class position’ as householder. The house in which he lives, and which he likes very much, belongs to me, and I’ll wager he would care for it a great deal more if I should give it to him. We should see, then, if he would ask his gardener to come and share it with him! I will make my son-in-law a house-

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## I BEGIN TO MANAGE MY FAMILY

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holder before a week, and we shall soon know if through him I have tightened by a link in his chain the man of 'middle-class position,' the *bourgeois*."

My grandmother did as she said, and my father declared that he was delighted with his mother-in-law's gracious gift, but he did not change his ideas an iota on account of it.

My father, although a householder, proclaimed himself, as usual, and with even more authority, a Proudhonian. I knew who Proudhon was, because all French persons, even the youngest, had heard of his famous saying: "Property is theft." My father said he shared Proudhon's opinions concerning the principle of the rights of man and of government. The pamphlet addressed by Proudhon to Blanqui, *Qu'est que la propriété*, never left my father's work-table. I had read it over, on the sly, without much understanding, but I pretended to have comprehended it, and I spoke of it, not in approval, but to say that, after all, there was some truth in it.

How my father decided between the conflicting ideas of Proudhon and Considérant—the latter having defended the right to possess property—I do not know.

There were great discussions in my family on all

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the questions raised apropos of the association of insects, and of their life in common; but my father, full of gratitude for my grandmother's generous gift, would have found it difficult to speak of *bourgeoise* selfishness, therefore he let us joke about his "theories of animal socialism and his insects' minds," as grandmother said.

But my grandfather abhorred revolutionary ideas to such a degree that he scarcely tolerated the mention of Proudhon, even in a joking way.

"Revolutionary speeches are pure gangrene," he said. "They propagate themselves in the social body and oblige us some fine day to cut off a member of it. Who will give me back my Emperor to silence all these agitating reformers? Oh! yes, to silence them, for they say even more than they do."

"My dear father-in-law," my father answered, "one is often obliged to say much more than he can do, for action follows words slowly. The elements of resistance to progress are always powerful enough to hold it back, at least half way. It is like the two hundred thousand heads Marat asked for, adding: 'They will always diminish the number enough.'"

One simultaneous cry escaped us all:

"Oh! the horrible man!"



## XVIII

### I REVISIT CHIVRES

**T**HE phalanstery and *L'Esprit des Bêtes* had a great success at my school, and it may be imagined what were our attempts at social reform; but our love of animals increased, and sometimes the observations of many of my schoolmates about them were interesting.

The summer came, and with it my return to Chivres for the months of July and August.

To say what was Marguerite's delight at seeing me again, and Roussot's (whom they had made remember me by singing to him a daily song like mine), to tell of the welcome of Marguerite's old mother, and that of the village children, who had grown a year's size taller, would be impossible.

Grandfather left me this time without sadness, being sure of the warm welcome I should receive.

The journey seemed much shorter this time. I was delighted to find my dear aunts again, and they were most happy at seeing me once more. They said I looked like a young lady now, which flattered me extremely.

But they were far from congratulating me on my ideas of reform according to those comprised

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in *L'Esprit des Bêtes*, or on my interest in the Fronde, which they thought must have prevented my studying seriously; neither did they approve of my father's formula concerning "middle-class positions which were about to break."

There were explosions of indignation against my father, who would injure my mind with such insanities, they declared.

My aunt Constance made fun of me in such a droll way—she much resembled my grandmother in wit—that I lowered my arms before her. The bees, the ants, *L'Esprit des Bêtes*, often mentioned in our conversations, gave my merry great-aunt such opportunities for comical criticisms, in which my father's ideas, upheld by me, were so ruthlessly pulled to pieces, that I gave them up.

As to my aunt Sophie, whom I took aside and endeavoured to convince of the necessity of reforms, she made me the same answer, variously expressed.

"I do not belong to this age; I find it preposterous," she said. "Everything that is happening comes from this cause: that people now think only of rushing to cities, where they develop poverty. Believe me, my dear little niece, happiness, peace, and true riches are found only in the country."

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## I REVISIT CHIVRES

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My revolutionary ideas were put away with my city clothes, and declared good only for Chauny. Even Marguerite said to me one day:

“Your ideas, Mam’zelle Juliette, turn poor people’s heads. They talk about them in villages. Workmen declare that their friend, Monsieur Proudhon, says that the *bourgeoise* have stolen property from the nobility, and that poor people should now steal it from the *bourgeoise*. It is pitiful to hear such things; those who have to work should work and believe that it is only God who can give them an income in Heaven.”

I knew my two hundred and fifty Latin words well. I had determined to understand and remember aunt Sophie’s lessons, and thought in consequence that I should soon be able to read Latin, which was my dear teacher’s desire. I was very enthusiastic about it and made real progress.

During our work in the fields, which began monotonously again and took much time, aunt Sophie would tell me the Latin names of everything about us.

When I found an analogy between the Picardy *patois*—which I had acquired the habit of speaking with my maid Arthémise—and Latin, it pleased me so much, that aunt Sophie asked one of our relatives, a Raincourt of Saint Quentin, to

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send her an almanac in the Picardy tongue, called *The Plowman*. She then devoted herself to a veritable monk's work in adding to my stock all the Latin words to be found in Picardy *patois*. *The Plowman*, in speaking of work in the fields, enabled me to step over a new frontier in my comprehension of the bucolics.

My aunt Sophie's marvellous aptitude for teaching made her derive profit from everything, and one could really say of her that she taught by amusing.

There was only one new thing in our order of life: My aunt Constance, who suffered from anæmia, had need of cold douches, and the doctor ordered her to go and take them by the side of the mill-wheel. Cold baths were excellent for me, and I took one every day in the pretty wash-house of the close, so my aunt Constance took me with her every afternoon. She was as gay and as much of a child as I, and we would amuse ourselves so much that we laughed till we cried. The bathing hour at the mill became a regular frolic, and aunt Anastasie, seduced by my descriptions of it, came with us once or twice and finally always accompanied us. Soon the miller's wife joined our party, and then Marguerite. Aunt Sophie alone resisted. She had not left the house or the close

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for twenty years. Great-grandmother moved with difficulty from her arm-chair, so there was no hope of bringing her, and, besides, one of her daughters was always obliged to stay with her.

Roussot, therefore, alone remained to be asked to join us, and I invited him one day after breakfast, when he had his daily bread, by a well-turned speech intermingled with songs.

While we were laughing, Roussot answered, if not my speech at least my song, and we concluded he had accepted the invitation.

That afternoon Marguerite led him by the bridle into the little river. I was mounted on him and was going to take my plunge from his back; but the bath made him so merry that he threw me off disrespectfully into the water. He even dared to kick about and splashed us all over so much that we could not see clearly enough to drive him out of the water.

We laughed more that day than on any other, but we did not propose, however, to try again the experience of a bath in company with Roussot the next day, for he was really too free and easy in his manners.

The two months spent with my aunts seemed like two weeks. I had never until then fully realised how rapidly time can pass.



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But my annual visit to Chivres was so dear to me, it had become such a joy in my life, that I should have thought myself wrong to have sorrowed over its short duration.





## XIX

### I BEGIN MY LITERARY WORK

**I** DO not know whether it was from my aunt Sophie's influence, or my contact with nature, living amid it, or whether it was the slow, clever training of my mind by my father, that made my brain swarm with poetical, mythological, and classical images. I dreamed in turn of Homer and of Virgil, whom I called his great-nephew, in order to give him the same degree of relationship to Homer as that which I possessed towards aunt Sophie.

In September and October of that year, after I had returned to Chauny, I thought I had become a poet. I wrote rhymes about everything I saw: the sun, the moon, the heavens, birds, flowers, fruit, and even about the vegetables in my large garden at Chauny, in which I lived all day during the last months of my vacation.

I confided with trembling my first "poem" to grandmother, and she criticised it with deep emotion. I criticised it myself later with extreme humiliation and contrition. I was already a well-instructed girl, and I might have done far better, but my grandparents found this poetry so beauti-

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ful that they read and re-read it to all comers, and grandfather took it with him to his club.

The idea of writing some day most certainly came to me at this time, for I did not cease to cover paper with verses and prose from that day.

I said to myself what was a curious thing for a girl of my age to think: that one must feel deep emotion in order to write and to move others, and I sought all manner of pretexts to arouse my emotions.

There was at the end of our large garden, at the foot of a very high wall, a plot of currant-bushes, too much in the shade to yield much fruit; so they were allowed to grow at will, mixed with raspberry bushes and brambles.

I had a circular place made for me in this underwood. I carried some garden chairs and a table to it, and I called this corner "my temple of verdure." No one but myself was allowed to enjoy it. I lived there, during my vacations, from breakfast to dinner time, dreaming, when the weather permitted, and, above all, telling myself stories in which I took extreme delight.

I put so much emotion into my voice that it made my heart ache. I would often cry bitterly over the unhappiness, the sufferings, the vicissitudes of the misery I invented.

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I can hear myself even to-day, and see myself sitting amongst my brambles, with the shadow of the high wall falling upon me, and beginning my story in this wise:

“There was once upon a time a poor little boy,”—or little girl, or a poor animal, chosen from among those I loved the best, whom I made most unhappy on account of this or that, and my sorrow for them always increased, for I had no pity, either for my own feelings or for those of my heroes. Their sufferings became so poignant that I sobbed. How many victims I invented! The distant noise of the garden gate, announcing Arthémise coming to call me to dinner, alone decided me to make my victims happy, especially if they had been obliged to suffer privations. I could not have gone to the table and carried with me the anguish of letting them die of hunger!

After some days of this sorrowful exercise, I selected the story which seemed to me the most touching and dramatic; I put it into rhyme or wrote it in prose on a large sheet of paper in my best handwriting to read to grandmother.

On Sundays, as soon as vespers were over, I shut myself up in my room and composed a review of the week's events. This composition was a bargain between my grandparents and myself. They

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gave me a cake made of puff-paste called frangipane, which I loved, and which grandfather went to get himself at the confectioner's at dinner-time, so as to have it hot, and cooked to the right degree. I regaled my dear "ancestors"—this was the new name I bestowed upon them—with my writings, and they regaled me with frangipane, cut into three parts.

Ah! if I had never had other hearers and readers save my grandparents, how much criticism would have been spared me, and how much enthusiastic success I would have had! No public, no admirers were ever so convinced as they that they were listening to *chefs d'œuvres*.

My friend Charles, the professor, often invited to our table on Sundays, was obliged to proffer his share of praise. He did so most willingly, for his affection for me blinded him. How many times did I hear him say:

"There is something of worth in what that child writes; she will make her mark."

My grandmother drank in my praise as if it were the nectar of the gods.

Was my friend Charles half sincere? I believed so, but another person, a newcomer, who soon took possession of all our hearts, was surely and entirely so.

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His name was Monsieur Blondeau. He was a State Recorder, and had taken an apartment on the ground floor of our house, on the opposite side of the hall from us, which looked out on our blossoming courtyard and the street at once. His apartment comprised an office, a drawing-room, bedroom, and kitchen, and on the first story a room for his old servant, who served him as maid-of-all-work.

Blondeau—I never called him Monsieur from the first week after his arrival—was an old bachelor, very ugly, his face all seamed and scarred, because when he was a child this same old servant had let him fall out of a high window on a heap of stones; but his kindness, his constant desire to devote himself to others and to be useful to them, to love them, and to make himself beloved, made him adorable.

I soon gave him the title of friend, and, as he was tired of *table d'hôte* life, and, as his old servant, whom he had brought with him from Lons-le-Saulnier, was capable only of cooking his breakfast passably well, I obtained grandmother's permission to have him dine with us every evening, knowing it was his dream and ambition. He was another one fanatically devoted to me—rather let me say, one of my slaves.

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Although he had much work to do, having no clerk, I enlisted him to aid me in doing my arithmetic exercises and in copying out my week's compositions. He read admirably, far better than grandmother, and he became my habitual reader.

It would not have been strange had I been persuaded by all these flattering opinions that my talents, which Blondeau said "grew as fast as grass," surpassed those of all known prodigies.

Even my father, who was a lettered man, and whose good taste should have enlightened him concerning his daughter's lucubrations, considered my writings marvellous.

But my mother, with her usual lack of indulgence, rendered me the service of sobering me regarding all this praise. She put things in their proper place, even exaggerating them in a contrary sense. She declared that what I wrote was inept, and that they would make me a mediocre person by fostering in me a phenomenal pride.

I alone was not vexed with her. She helped me to criticise myself, although sometimes I thought her criticisms as excessive as the admiration of my flatterers was exaggerated.

Having a sufficient company at home on Sundays, my friend Charles included, I determined to put my weekly reviews into dialogues. Each one

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of us read his personal pages in turn, or we replied to one another

When I think of all I made my grandparents and Blondeau read and say, I am abashed. Moreover, everyone kept the name I had given him, and the character of the rôle assigned to him, throughout the evening. They allowed themselves to be questioned by me, and answered "attentively," as my friend Charles said. Had they at least been amused with this child's play, it would have been tolerable, but on the contrary, they were obliged to rediscuss the weekly discussions, the wherefores of the most subtle questions I had laid before myself, which must often have been rare nonsense and silliness.

My heart is full of gratitude and tenderness for my four sufferers, and, as these recollections bring them before me, perhaps I love them to-day even more than I did at that time.







## XX

### LOUIS NAPOLEON'S FLIGHT FROM PRISON

**M**Y godmother Camille, of whom I was very fond, and whom I used to visit every Thursday at the glass manufactory at Saint-Gobain—not to amuse myself, but to talk with her, for she conversed with me on serious subjects—had left Chauny two years previously, but she came every two or three months to pass a week with us. She lived at Ham, where my godfather was the manager of a sugar-refinery. She was very intimate with Prince Louis Napoleon, and my grandfather joked with her frequently about the honour of having inspired a Napoleon—and, he doubted not, a future Emperor—with “a sentiment” for her, and he went, moreover, himself to assure the Pretender about his hope of seeing him an Emperor some day.

It annoyed my grandfather to hear that this Bonaparte was called a socialist. But he declared that it could not be—it was a calumny.

My godmother repeated to my grandfather something that the “Prince” had said to her before he wrote it, and which she thought admirable:

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"With the name I bear, I must have either the gloom of a prison-cell, or the light of power."

"We shall have him one day for Emperor," said my grandfather. It was from his lips that I heard for the first time: "We shall have Napoleon," which was so often repeated later.

"But the Republic is his ideal," said my godmother, who knew by heart everything that Louis Napoleon wrote. "He does not know whether France is 'republican or not, but he will aid the people, if he is called to power, to find a governmental form embodying the principles of the Revolution.' Those are his exact words," said my godmother. She added: "He formulates his ambition thus:

"'I wish to group around my name the partisans of the People's Sovereignty.'"

"You are crazy about your Prince, Camille," answered my grandmother, "and you see him with the prestige of all you feel for his misfortunes—as a prisoner, coupled with the greatness of his name. But was there ever a more ridiculous pretender? Remember his rash attempt at Boulogne, with his three-cornered hat, the sword of Austerlitz, and the tamed eagle. He is grotesque."

If my father came while Camille was with us he was much amused at my grandfather's exaspera-

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tion when he and Camille would declare that Louis Napoleon was more of a socialist than themselves, for had he not written:

“What I wish is to give to thirty-five millions of Frenchmen the education, the moral training, the competency which, until now, has been the ap-panage only of the minority.”

“The proof that he is a socialist,” added my father, “is that one of our party, Elie Sorin, swears by him; he is always saying to me: ‘Louis Napoleon is not a Pretender in our eyes, but a member of our party, a soldier under our flag. The Napoleon of to-day, a captive, personifies the grief of the people, in irons like himself.’”

Sometimes my grandfather, after having been angry, laughed at this kind of talk.

“He is a sly fellow,” he replied. “He is making fools of you all. A Bonaparte is made to be an Emperor, you will see, and we shall have Napoleon!”

My godmother adored my grandmother, and she should have been her daughter instead of my mother. They wrote to each other every week and sympathised on all subjects. My grandmother, apropos of Camille, put on mysterious airs even in my presence. They were constantly whispering

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## LOUIS NAPOLEON'S FLIGHT

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secrets together, especially since my godmother lived at Ham.

One day I unintentionally surprised them with a boot placed on grandmother's work-table, at which they were gazing with tender eyes. They looked so droll contemplating this boot that I could not help asking to what fairy prince this precious thing had belonged?

My godmother answered:

"To Prince Louis."

"Did you steal it from him, godmother, to keep as a relic?"

"He gave it to me."

"His boot?"

"Yes."

"For what?"

"For a bouquet-holder."

I burst out laughing.

"But look, dear scoffer, how small it is. Can you not understand that he is vain of it?"

"Ah! no, to send a bouquet in his boot is not good manners. Has he worn it, or is it new?"

"He has worn it, of course. If he had not, it would be a boot like any other boot. But he has worn it, Juliette, he has worn it!"

And my godmother reassumed the admiring air she had worn when I entered the drawing-room.

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"Really, godmother, I must tell you that you seem to me to be a little crazy!"

One day our Camille arrived suddenly from Ham in a state of extraordinary agitation.

She threw herself on grandmother's neck, where she remained a long while, sobbing. She whispered in her friend's ear, who uttered many exclamations, many "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" intermingled with: "Camille, how happy you must be!" alternating with "Camille, how unhappy you are!"

Blondeau and I were present at this scene, of which, of course, we understood absolutely nothing.

My grandfather arrived. There were the same whisperings in his ear, the same exclamations, the same embraces, and again: "Camille, how happy you must be! Camille, how unhappy you are!"

"May the Supreme Being be blessed!" suddenly exclaimed my grandfather, in a solemn tone, for he never invoked the Supreme Being except on stormy days, when the thunder recalled the noise of cannon.

Something phenomenal was certainly happening. Not being curious, I had great respect for secrets, especially as my family kept few from me. I did not try to discover this secret, therefore, but I could not help thinking that some important

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person had been saved after great peril, and, strangely, that my godmother was at once happy and unhappy about it.

After dinner I said to Blondeau :

“ Does this mystery interest you? Are you trying to understand something about it? ”

“ I understand it perfectly,” he replied.

“ What is it? ”

“ *Parbleu!* it is that the Prince, who is cracked about your crazy godmother ” (Blondeau was an Orléanist, of my grandfather's way of thinking), “ has escaped from prison. I think she has helped him in his flight, and that, as she adores him and is now separated from him, she must feel, as your grandparents say, at once very happy and very unhappy ; that is all the mystery.”

The next morning at breakfast they foolishly continued to keep up their mysterious airs before me ; so I said to my godmother, Blondeau not being present :

“ Why do you try to hide what every one knows, —that Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte has escaped from his prison at Ham? ”

“ How can it be known already? When was it discovered? ” exclaimed my godmother. “ He had just escaped when I left yesterday afternoon, and they could not have known it before evening.”

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"Tell me the beginning of the story, god-mother," said I, "since I know the end."

She hesitated.

My grandmother, happy at having a chance to relate an adventure, asked Camille if she would allow her to tell it to me.

Godmother made a sign of assent.

"Well, imagine that Prince Louis pretended to be ill, and to have need of taking a purge, and shut himself up in his room."

"Oh! grandmother, that is not poetical," I interrupted.

"Be quiet! you must think of the end pursued and achieved. Well, then, as some workmen for several days had been going in and coming out of the citadel making repairs, he cut his beard and disguised himself as a carpenter, and passed out before the guard with a plank of wood on his shoulder."

"Grandmother, don't you think it rather commonplace for a prince to disguise himself as a carpenter?"

"I think it very clever of him to have got the better of his jailers, in spite of all their surveillance. Doctor Conneau, who had been set free several months previously, arranged and prepared it all, aided by Camille. Yesterday he drove out

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of the town in a tilbury with your godmother, who got out and hid herself at a certain point, and gave her place to the prince, who had doffed his workman's clothes; and with well-prepared relays, Doctor Conneau and the Prince reached the frontier. Meanwhile your godmother came to us in a carriage she had hired at a village, after having walked a long way."

Was the Prince saved? No one knew as yet, since no one except Blondeau, who knew nothing about it, had spoken of it. However, at dinner, Blondeau absolved me of my untruth, by announcing that he had heard that morning of the Prince's successful escape.

"All the same," he added, as I had previously said, "to disguise one's self as a carpenter is not irreproachable good form."

"A Napoleon elevates every one of his acts. A Bonaparte could not remain the prisoner of an Orléans," replied my grandfather. "He has escaped. That is everything."

"The romantic part of it," added my grandmother, "lies in the fact that he has escaped from his jailers, that his prison doors, so strongly barred, have been opened by a stratagem that no one foresaw nor discovered. It is those who imprisoned him—I regret to say it—who have been tricked



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and made ridiculous. I love King Louis Philippe, as Camille knows, more than this Bonaparte, who seems to me in his character of pretender a plotter and an intriguer. But as a man, from all Camille has told me of him, I confess he is charming; and as he was her friend, I think she did right in aiding him in his flight. If I had been in her place I would not have hesitated either."

My godmother remained with us for a fortnight, but was not consoled for the absence of her Prince, for I saw her weeping more than once.





## XXI

### MY FIRST GREAT SORROW

**N**OTHING in particular happened to occupy or disturb my life until the winter of 1847. Things repeated themselves monotonously. The collisions between my relatives were multiplied, the divergence between their reciprocal opinions became more and more intensified. My grandmother became somewhat embittered, and occasionally blamed her dear King Louis Philippe; my grandfather declared himself more certain of the future triumph of his Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. He was a member of several Bonapartist committees. My father thought he was nearer to his democratic-socialist republic; my aunts mourned more and more over the imbecility of the people in believing in those who deceived them; over political immorality, and the madness of all parties.

I had at that time one of the most violent, most despairing revolts, and one of the most inconsolable sorrows of my life.

The winter was particularly cold. My large garden was filled with snow, but I had discovered

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that it still possessed beauty. My grandmother, who felt the cold severely, did not move from her room, which opened into the drawing-room, or from the drawing-room itself. She kept up a large wood fire in it, which she excelled in making.

Grandfather often said to her that she proved the untruth of the proverb which said that "one must be in love or be a philosopher to know how to make a good fire." "Now, you are neither the one nor the other," he added one day.

Grandmother replied:

"I am a philosopher because I bear with you, and am not angry with you in spite of all you have made me endure. I am no longer in love with you, but is it not because my passion for my husband was destroyed at a very early hour that I remain in love with love, and that I console or distract myself in reading of the romantic happiness or unhappiness of others?"

Blondeau loved the snow as much as I. Well-shod with Strasburg woollen socks and thick *sabots*, we would go after breakfast to make enormous heaps of snow in which we would dig galleries, or else we would mould figures with it. The trees, the plants, the borderings of box, the walled-fruit, were prettier one than the other, under their snowy garments.

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Along the high wall, overtopping the trees of my temple of verdure, at the end of the garden, whose branches were all powdered with brilliant hoar-frost shining on a carpet looking like white wool, huge stalactites hung, superb and glittering. It was a fairy scene when at sunset these stalactites would light up, shining under the last rays of the sun, when drops like diamonds would hang on the extreme end of their delicate points.

"Blondeau, my dear Blondeau, look at this, look at that, how pretty, how beautiful, how splendid and brilliant it is!" I would cry.

My admiration was inexhaustible as was Blondeau's pleasure at listening to me and seeing me so delighted, so merrily happy.

But one day in this same snowy and fairy-like garden, where everything was so dear and precious to me, Blondeau seized me by the hand and began to walk rapidly. Although I asked him what it meant, he did not answer me.

"Let us walk around the garden," he replied to all my questions.

"Walk around it, Blondeau! We have already done so four times, and you want to begin again. Ah! no, indeed! you must tell me what is the matter with you."

He was so agitated I was afraid he had become

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mad, and I was worried more than can be imagined. My heart stood still to see him like this and I could neither breathe nor walk. I drew my hand suddenly from his, and, planting myself before him, I said:

“Speak to me, Blondeau, for I think you are crazy.”

“I wish I were,” he replied, despairingly, “so as not to make you suffer the dreadful sorrow I am going to cause you. Ah! your grandmother has given me a nice errand to perform. I was too stupid, truly, to take upon myself the duty of telling you such news. I wish I were a hundred feet underground.”

“Well, what is it, Blondeau? You are killing me!”

He seized my hand again and went around the garden almost running, then he stopped suddenly, having at last found the courage to say to me:

“Juliette, my darling child, you know that Madame Dufey has sold her boarding-school to the Demoiselles André, your mother’s friends, who knew them in the hamlet that was burned down in the first days of your parents’ marriage—the hamlet where your grandfather’s uncle lived.”

“Yes, I know, and those ladies are very nice. I

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have seen them. They told me they cherished a very dear memory of my mother, and would be happy to extend their faithful affection to her daughter. I thought the phrase very pretty and have remembered it. What sorrow do you think I can feel from them? ”

Instructed by my grandmother, Blondeau had certainly prepared a long speech, but, carried away by haste after all his hesitations, he said to me in a brutal way:

“ Well, your grandmother has sold the garden to the Demoiselles André to build a boarding-school in it.”

“ What garden? ”

“ This one, ours, hers, yours! ”

“ You are telling an untruth! ”

“ Alas, I am not. Your grandmother did not dare to tell you until the contract was signed; she knew that you would beg her not to do it, and would prevent her; now the thing is irrevocable. Everything was finished this morning.”

“ It is abominable. I wish to keep my trees, my temple of verdure, my brambles. I don't want—I don't want them to be taken from me! Blondeau, buy back my garden, you have money. We will make a house in it for our two selves; you, at least, cannot abandon me.”

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And I threw myself in his arms, weeping.

It seemed to me that all my trees raised their branches heavenward, and that they wept with me under the sunshine.

What! my vines, with their bunches of muscat grapes, of which I was so fond; what! my immense apricot tree, which I had had measured and which was the largest one in Chauny, and which people came to see, with its five yards of breadth and ten yards of height; what! my box, which I had cut myself into balls and borders; was all this to be pulled up, cut, destroyed?

"Blondeau, why has grandmother caused me this great grief, for which I shall never be consoled?"

"Because she could never find such a chance again, and it is for your *dot*."

Then I burst forth.

"Oh! yes, again for money—that money which makes the misery of my life. It is like the inheritance for which mamma would have let me die! Grandmother is going to kill me that I may have a *dot*!"

This time it was I who provoked the "family drama," and what a drama it was! I showed myself on this occasion the passionate child of my violent-tempered father. My anger and my hard-

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ness towards my grandmother made her suffer terribly.

I shut myself up in my room for more than a fortnight. Arthémise brought me my meals. I would open my door only to her. Neither Blondeau, grandfather, nor my friend Charles were allowed to enter. My grandmother did not even dare to come upstairs. I wrote her every day a letter filled with cruel reproaches, to which she had not the courage to reply.

Her great fear was that my father would arrive and that I would wish to leave her forever. However, to tranquillize her on that score, there was a serious quarrel pending between herself and my father at that time, the latter having wished to borrow money from her to pay the debts of his soldier-brother, who led a wild life; and as she had refused, they had not seen each other for two months.

I thought of Blérancourt, where the garden was small, to be sure, but was separated from other gardens only by hedges, where I should have my father, who I certainly loved as much as grandmother; but my mother's coldness, compared with grandfather's exuberance and gaiety, frightened me. And then at Blérancourt there was no Blondeau nor friend Charles. Besides, I knew very well



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that, although my mother was jealous of grandfather's affection for me, she would blame me for abandoning her, would say I was ungrateful, and, moreover, I could not think of explaining to her grandmother's reason for selling the garden and her anxiety regarding my *dot*.

These reflections following one another in my mind, at times made me indulgent toward grandmother, but, as soon as I thought of the destruction of my garden, I suffered so acutely that I listened no longer to justice.

I thought also of asking my aunts to take me, of writing to Marguerite to come with Roussot some night, when I would give her *rendezvous* in the little street *des Juifs* on which our garden opened, so that she could steal me away; but I had the secret instinct that if my aunts were very happy to have me two months in the year, at the time when they lived out of doors, my turbulence, my superabundance of gaiety, of life, my passion for movement, would tire them during a whole year through.

After all, there were only my grandparents, Blondeau, my friend Charles, and Arthémise to love and really understand me, and—I added to myself—to put up with me.

I had missed going to school for two weeks.

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## MY FIRST GREAT SORROW

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Grandmother said I was ill and it was believed, because no one saw me about.

However, grandmother finally invoked the aid of the dean, whom I liked very much, because he wished me to make my first communion when I was ten and a half years old, and not to wait another year. He feared my father's influence over me, which fact, of course, they did not tell me, so I was very flattered to be the youngest and the most remarked in the catechism class. I was as tall as the tallest girls in it.

Grandmother told the dean the truth about my passionate love of my garden, of my extreme delight in nature, and of her sudden resolve to sell the garden on account of the exceptional price she received, and for the benefit of my *dot*, etc., etc.

The dean came and knocked at my door, but I did not open it, in spite of the touching appeal he made to me. I heard grandmother sobbing outside. From that moment my heart was softened and my rancour fled, but a bad feeling of pride prevented me from calling them back. I repented, however, and when Arthémise came to bring me some ink for which I had asked, I opened my door and found myself face to face with the dean.

The moment for an amiable solution had come, but in order to save my dignity I pretended to let

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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myself be overcome by the dean's arguments, and to be influenced by his threats not to receive me any longer at the catechism class and to delay my first communion until the following year, in 1848.

"Come," he said to me, "and ask your grandmother's pardon."

"No, your reverence, do not exact that I should ask pardon. I cannot do it. I am too unhappy to think that my grandmother has sold my garden, and that I have lost it forever. Besides, it is not necessary. You will see that my grandmother will be only too glad to kiss me."

Grandmother was waiting for me in the drawing-room, knowing that the dean had gone into my room and having learned from Arthémise that I had listened to him and had yielded.

That night, at dinner, they had a festival in my honour without saying anything to me about my misbehaviour. It was not the time to scold me. I was not at all consoled for the loss of my garden, for my flowers and fruit, for all its greenery, or even for its snow.

I did not see the first flowers blossom, I did not gather them for grandmother's table, nor for the little white vase in which I was wont to arrange artistically the first Bengal roses.

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## MY FIRST GREAT SORROW

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As soon as the fine weather came, and during all that spring, the workmen were pulling down the rampart behind the high garden-wall, and everything fell in together. They cut a new street, on which the large principal door of the school was to open. The buildings were to be raised only twenty yards from our courtyard; the green wooden lattice was at once replaced by an ugly wall.

All the noise of the demolition of the garden broke my heart. During the night, the moaning of the wind made me think that I heard the death-sighs of my trees.

One Thursday afternoon, when I was playing sadly in the courtyard, I heard a sharp cry, a whistling, and a sort of tearing apart. Something was certainly being torn up and was resisting and groaning with all its power. I felt it must be the death-torture of my apricot tree. Formerly, at this time of the year the sap would rise to the smallest twigs on its branches, and I could see its first buds. Now they were torturing it.

This uprooting of my apricot tree revived all my sorrow. Behind that odious wall its agony was taking place.

I imagined that I could see devastation ending

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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its cruel work. They were digging up the last vestiges of the life of my trees—their roots—and they were levelling the ground. I suffered from it all so much that I was nearly ill.





## XXII

### MY FIRST RAILWAY JOURNEY

**T**HE reconciliation between my father and my grandmother was brought about by a friend of my uncle Amédée (an uncle whom none of us at Chauny knew, because he never left Africa). This friend had paid my uncle's debts in time to prevent his being obliged to resign his commission as an officer.

It was my grandfather's opinion that uncle Amédée was much too fond of amusement, although very brave and intelligent. In saying this, however, he hastened to add:

"Campaign life impairs the most rigid private virtue."

"As it impaired yours," said grandmother.

And Blondeau ended the conversation by saying:

"Peace be with those who are no more!"

One day when we were not expecting him, my father arrived, looking very happy, and said to grandmother before me:

"Will you give me Juliette? I wish to take her on a long journey."

"From Chauny to Blérancourt?"

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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"No, no, much farther."

"Where, dear Jean-Louis?"

"To Amiens, Abbeville, and Verton. I will show her the sea, which I wish to behold myself, for I have never seen it. And better still, we shall travel to it on the railway."

"Ah, no! Not in the railway coaches!" cried my grandmother. "I am afraid of those monstrosities, for they say that every day, every time people get into them, there are accidents—persons killed and wounded. Juliette is not yet old enough to guarantee herself from danger by making her will. But how has this great plan come about?"

"You remember, dear mother, that young workman, Liénard, who was so wonderfully intelligent, in whom I was so interested, and whom I had educated to be an engineer?"

"Yes, yes, and that was one of your good works. To elevate a poor man from a low position, is meritorious and useful, in a different manner from that of torturing one's mind to discover a way to ruin the middle classes, and to make poverty universal."

"Do you hear that, Jean-Louis?" said my father, laughing.

"Well," he continued, "Liénard has made his way brilliantly. He is now the head of a division of the Boulogne-sur-Mer railway. He has six

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## MY FIRST RAILWAY JOURNEY

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hundred employés and workmen under him to-day, and he wishes me to see him in the exercise of a function of which he is proud, and which he owes to me. He has invited me to pass a fortnight, together with Juliette, at Verton. Madame Liénard is devoted to our daughter, whom she always comes to see when she knows she is at Blérancourt, doesn't she, Juliette? "

"Grandmother," I replied, "if you will permit it, I should be delighted to take a long journey with papa. It is my dream to travel. I am very fond of Madame Liénard." And stooping down to her ear, I added: "And besides, grandmother, it will distract me from my great sorrow."

"Yes, Juliette, I think so, too," she answered. "Your father must leave you with me for two weeks to prepare your wardrobe, for I wish you to have everything you may need, and then you shall go to see the sea."

When my father had left, grandmother said to me: "I must obtain a dispensation from the curé so that you may leave the catechism class without having your first communion delayed in consequence. But I think there will be no difficulty about it."

The entire town of Chauny was interested in this journey. My grandfather told how it had



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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come about to all who wished to hear it. At school I was much questioned, and in the same degree that I had been humiliated at having the girls say to me: "It seems that your grandmother has sold your famous garden which you thought as fine as a kingdom," just so proud was I in thinking of all the interesting things that I should have to relate to my little friends on my return.

The journey from Paris to Amiens was, of course, by diligence.

We stopped an entire day at Saint-Quentin to see my relatives, the Raincourts, to whom I talked of my dear aunts and my grandmother, and who were happy to know that their cousins were reconciled.

At Amiens we stopped again to see other Raincourts. I visited the cathedral, and the impression I received of its power and grandeur remains with me still. My cousins took us to the opera. They played *Charles VI*. I was somewhat bewildered at the immensity of the amphitheatre, but I remember the scenes represented, the ballet, and, above all, the extraordinary noise of the mad applause of the entire audience when they sang the air, "No, no, never in France, never shall England reign!"

Like all good Picardines, I detested the English, and I clapped my hands with as much enthusiasm

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## MY FIRST RAILWAY JOURNEY

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as the other spectators, at the three repetitions of "No, no, never in France!"

I had a headache for three days from the effects of that evening. The sound of the orchestra had bruised my temples.

I saw a railway for the first time at Amiens. Young people of eleven of the present day cannot imagine what it was then to a girl ten and a half years old, to hear the ear-splitting whistle, the groaning of the machine, to get into high, fragile-looking boxes, to see the smoke, the blackness of the machinist and his aid, looking, I thought, like devils. I was very much frightened.

Liénard came to meet us at Amiens, and, thanks to him, we had a coach to ourselves. My father was obliged to scold me, for I became very pale as the train started. Contrary to my usual habit, I was silent for a long time, not curious and asking no questions.

I held on with both hands to the seat, so little did I feel secure with the odd movement. But after a time I grew bolder, and kneeling on the seat I tried to look out of the window to see the houses and trees flying behind us so quickly.

"Juliette!" Liénard cried to me, "don't lean out in that way. This morning, under the tunnel which we are going to enter, a lady did what you

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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were doing and she had her head cut off by a cross train."

I threw myself back in the seat, and when we entered the tunnel a great chill shook me. I thought I saw the body of the headless lady thrown into the coach!

Decidedly, I preferred diligences to railways.





## XXIII

### MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SEA

**A**T Abbeville we found another relative, the daughter of our cousin at Amiens. In ten minutes I was the best of friends with her two children, and I would have liked to continue playing with them there, or to take them with me to Verton, to the house of Madame Liénard, who had no children.

The railway between Abbeville and Verton was not yet completed. At Verton was the branch that our friend Liénard was finishing. I said good-bye to my cousins, very sadly, as I got into the carriage, but I forgot them immediately, as my mind was distracted by the route over which we were travelling. I breathed for the first time the tonic air of the sea, and it intoxicated me. My father was in ecstasies over everything, and I took a noisy share in his delight.

Verton, the object of our great journey, had been described to us by our friend Liénard.

“Verton is situated,” he said, “between Montreuil, built on an eminence, and the hamlet of Berck, which is on the downs quite near the sea-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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shore, and it is the prettiest village in Pas-de-Calais. Along its straight, well-laid-out, sloping streets, which the rain cannot soak into, are dainty houses, rivalling one another in cleanliness and brightness. Berck is a miserable place, inhabited solely by poor fisher folk, but I am sure the railway will make it eventually a popular seaside resort, and I have bought land there which certainly will become very valuable. You should buy some, Lambert, for Juliette's *dot*."

"Good Heavens! With what could I buy land?" said father, laughing.

"Why, your mother-in-law has just sold——"

"Be quiet, Liénard," I cried, "don't speak of my *dot*, you make me unhappy. Let me forget it."

My father and Liénard, puzzled at my words, wished to know what they meant. They obtained only this answer:

"I don't want any *dot*! I don't want any!"

"You have commendable principles," said father. "A girl should not be forced to give money in order to be married."

Suddenly Liénard exclaimed:

"There is the sea!"

Papa and I looked, holding each other's hands. It was a superb day, but a high wind came from

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## MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SEA

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the sea, which seemed borne in by the rising tide.

The seemingly endless, swelling flood we gazed upon advanced towards us, the waves looking like swaying monsters, ever growing larger. The foam alone reached us; the sea was held back by the immovable shore.

“I made you take this great journey so that you should see this as soon as possible,” said Liénard, delighted at our wonderment. “Well, Juliette, you, who are astonished at nothing, what do you say of it?”

I had no desire to speak. Enormous waves, with movements like serpents, broke into snowy foam on the beach, at first with a colossal crash, striking the pebbles, then with a soft roaring of the water as it rushed over the round stones.

The sea was so immense, it extended so far beneath the sky, that I asked myself how it was that all that mass of heavy water did not capsize the earth; but I realised that it was infantile to think this, and that I must not say it aloud, because then I should probably receive a very simple answer which would prove my stupidity or my ignorance. I had never thought of the sea as a phenomenal thing. I had not imagined it very large, but now it appeared to me immense and limitless. I was

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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lost in contemplating it, dominated by it to such a degree that I could not express the astonishment I felt.

"Papa," I said, as we were leaving the sea, "I seem to see the shaggy manes of Neptune's horses on the crests of the waves."

"And I am thinking of Homer all the while," father answered me.

We left the seashore, talking of it on our way, and at last we saw Verton, with the old castle overlooking it. We entered the village, where the people, curious at our coming, were on their doorsteps. Liénard was the most important person of the place, excepting the owner of the castle, who lived on the second story.

"The Comte de Lafontaine, my landlord," Liénard said to my father, "is a former cavalry officer. I do not know a more charming man. To be sure, he is not a republican, like you and myself, my dear Lambert, but with that exception, he is perfect."

Liénard was my father's devoted pupil, and followed his teaching in everything.

The castle was reached by the principal street of Verton, as one came from Abbeville—a street which ended directly at the park gates, the largest one of which was surmounted with the heraldic

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## MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SEA

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escutcheon of the Lafontaine family. The inscription on the escutcheon interested my father so much, and was the subject of such a long discussion between himself and Liénard that I found it in my notes of travel which I kept for grandmother.

Oh! they were very succinct notes, of which I can give an example:

“Verton, on a hill—gay little houses—old castle overlooking it—two stories—written above principal door in a circle—*Tel fieri qui ne tue pas*. Very, very large park and a farm, where I amuse myself all the time.”

With my memory to aid me, and the long, oft-repeated recitals of the events of my journey, the impressions of that time were deeply engraved in my mind, enabling me now to recall the details of this experience with all the more facility because one of Liénard's employés, placed with him by my father, still lives, and, through him I have been able to verify the accuracy of my recollections.

The park belonging to the castle seemed to me very large, and I amused myself, with my different friends in the household, by walking and playing in it for hours.

The castle of Verton is situated on the highest point of the park, and fronts the sea. The view from the second story is admirable. At night one



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can see the lighthouse of Berck. I never went to bed without looking at the great lantern lighting up the sea.

Madame Liénard did everything to please me, and spoiled me as if I belonged to her. The Comte de Lafontaine inspired me with sudden affection, for he took me seriously and wished to be my friend. I made several morning rendezvous with him in the park, and confided to him the great secret of my life—my inconsolable sorrow at the loss of my large garden. I talked to him of my trees with tears in my eyes; he seemed touched, and I remember how grateful I was to him when he answered:

“Love *my* trees a little during your stay here, as if they were your own.”

I had loved Monsieur Lafontaine's trees before he said this. They were the brothers of my own trees. When I shut my eyes in certain paths, I seemed to see my lost ones. They grew warm and shone in the sun like mine; they made the same noise in the wind. How very unhappy I was, to be sure, to have my great garden no longer!

The cows, the sheep, the horses and dogs of the farm interested me greatly. I wanted them all to grow fond of me, to know and love me. I was, as a child, as desirous to please animals as people.

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## MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SEA

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There were several donkeys, but they did not bray like Roussot, and they disdained my advances, devoted as they were to the farm children.

Our first long excursion was to Berck. After having left the Abbeville road and entered that of Berck, we saw scarcely any more cultivated fields. It looked to me like the desert, as I imagined it. There were hillocks of shifting sand, amid which were very small hamlets. Berck came last, and was the most lamentable of all. The village was composed of miserable huts, inhabited by poor sailor-fishermen, whom Liénard called "primitive men," and who lived solely by the product of their fishing. These huts, spread out at distances, were in a forlorn condition and falling to pieces.

One thing struck me at Berck: the market, like that at Blérancourt, where the weavers of the neighbourhood brought for sale the rolls of linen they had woven.

My father thought the beach of Berck magnificent, and he said that hospital refuges could certainly be built there, for the gentle and regular slope of the sands down to the sea would be an excellent place for children to play.

"The people of the place, although very rude and ignorant, are good and are hard workers," Liénard said. "They are excellent workmen. We

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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are blessed and loved as benefactors in all the region—except at Montreuil, because we bring more wealth here. They curse us,” he continued, “at Montreuil, the principal town of the country, for the making of the railway will deprive it of its animation. Crossed by the Calais route, as it is now, all the traffic passes through it; but before six months have passed, nothing will go that way, neither travellers nor merchandise. Its triple line of fortifications alone will remain, isolating it more than ever.”





## XXIV

### I RECEIVE A HANDSOME GIFT

“**T**HE end of your journey must not be Verton, my dear Lambert,” said Liénard one morning to my father. “I wish you to inspect the whole line. We will go to Boulogne-sur-Mer, and travel over a certain portion of the route in trucks. Then you will have shown to Juliette, Amiens—the most beautiful town of our Picardy—and Boulogne, one of its finest sea-ports.”

My father made no objection. The thought of seeing big ships delighted me. We were to return to Verton after visiting Boulogne and leave from there for Chauny. The railway train, with its little coaches open overhead, pleased me marvellously, but the large, locked-up coaches from which one could not get out except at the employés’ will, seemed like prisons to me, and I was honestly afraid of the tunnels, in which heads were sometimes cut off.

All the great cities I have seen later in my numerous travels over Europe have interested me in a different manner, and I have admired them for a thousand complex reasons, but none has left in my

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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memory a more deeply engraved impression than Boulogne-sur-Mer.

We were Liénard's guests, and he treated us like lords, in one of the best hotels of the place. I saw the sea all day long, and I, who was so fond of sleeping, would get up to look at it under the starlight. I saw it one night by full moonlight.

"Drops of gold shrank and expanded, crackled, leapt in playful sparkles on the water's surface, as if to encircle, in a frame of moving gold, Phœbe's beautiful face as she looked at herself in the sea."

I found these metaphors in one of my poems written at that time, and, incredible as it may seem, I still remember these unformed verses, which I did not dare to repeat to my father, and which I kept for the enraptured admiration of my grandparents, Blondeau, and my friend Charles.

The movement of the boats around the pier delighted me so much I wished never to leave the place, and my father was obliged to scold me sometimes and to drag me after him to the house.

I ate my first oyster at Boulogne. All my family were extremely fond of the fat oysters that came from the North. In winter, when my mother and father came to Chauny, they usually selected the day on which the fish-wagon arrived. This wagon, driven at full speed, and which had relays

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## I RECEIVE A HANDSOME GIFT

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like the post-wagon, brought to Chauny, on Friday mornings, the fish caught on the night of Wednesday to Thursday.

Every Friday during the oyster season, a basket containing twelve dozen oysters was brought to my grandmother's. My grandfather and father each ate four dozen. My grandmother and mother would eat two dozen, and Blondeau, when he was present, would take his dozen, here and there, from the portions of the others. Was it because I saw them eat such quantities that I could never swallow one? My reluctance absolutely grieved my family.

Liénard and I went shopping while my father talked with some democratic-socialist republicans whom he had discovered. I wanted to take to all my friends many of those little souvenirs one finds at seaside places, things utterly unknown at Chauny, and I had with me, in order to gratify this wish, all the money given to me by grandparents and Blondeau to spend on my journey. My purse, confided to Liénard's care, who bargained and paid for all my purchases, must, I thought, after calculating the amount expended, be very nearly empty. So, when my father promised me one morning a louis if I would eat an oyster, I did my best to please him, and at the same time to

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earn four large crowns. I swallowed one oyster, and afterwards others followed in great numbers, for I grew to like them.

I picked up quantities of shells, and I would have liked to carry many more away. I bought an immense covered basket, which I took with me wherever I went, and never left it for a moment during my return voyage, in spite of the supplication of my father, who tried every persuasive means possible to rid himself of the trouble of looking after it.

I went on the beach at Wimereux, where Prince Louis Napoleon landed in such grotesque fashion. I saw the great Emperor's column, and thought of my grandfather and my godmother.

My father spoke to Liénard and to me of "the man of Strasburg and Boulogne," and of his ancestor, "the man of the Brumaire." He was more indulgent towards the nephew than towards the uncle, whom he thus defined:

"The political juggler of the Revolution, whose final number of conquests, after the sacrifice of millions of men, was inferior to the conquests won by the fourteen armies of the Republic."

Napoleon I. was my father's special aversion. He spoke of him with hatred, as of a criminal. I knew some scathing and virulent poems written by

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## I RECEIVE A HANDSOME GIFT

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my father on the "Modern Cæsar," and when I recited them, I ended by naming their author: Jean-Louis Lambert.

My father had bought a tilbury as we passed through Amiens, the carriage-makers of the capital of our province being "renowned," as they then expressed it.

What was his astonishment, as we left the railway station on our return to Amiens, to see a very handsome horse harnessed to his tilbury, instead of the hired one which was to take it to Chauny. Liénard had accompanied us there.

"My dear friend," he said to my father, accentuating these words with feeling, "I beg of you to accept the little horse, as a small proof of my eternal gratitude."

My father, who delighted to give, but hated to accept things, refused bluntly; but Liénard's disappointment was so great, and I saw his eyes so full of tears, that I sought for a way to make my father yield.

"Will you give *me* your horse, Liénard?" I said. "I think it very pretty and I will take it."

Mutually embarrassed and grieved a moment before, my father and Liénard were much amused at my intervention.

"Ah, yes! I will give it to you," replied Lién-



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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ard. "It is yours, and I am not afraid now that your father will take it from you."

I adored the feeling of being important. But to have overcome this difficult situation did not suffice me.

"Now, since I have a horse and papa has a tilbury, I wish to return to Chauny in it and not in the diligence," I added.

"But it will take us three days instead of one," said father.

"Oh! papa, shall you really find three days quite alone with your daughter too long? You will tell me a lot of things, and I, also, will tell you as many. It will be so amusing to travel in a carriage, like gipsies."

"Do as she wishes, dear Lambert," said Liénard. "Come, get into your carriage and start. I will send you your packages by the diligence."

"Papa! papa! do, I beg of you, let us be off!"

"Has the horse eaten?" Liénard asked the groom.

"Yes, sir, he can go for five hours without needing anything more."

"Be off! be off!" our friend cried gaily, as he lifted me into the tilbury after kissing me.

My father and Liénard kissed each other, like

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## I RECEIVE A HANDSOME GIFT

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the loving friends they were, and father got into the carriage.

"Where is the state high-road?" he asked the groom.

Liénard replied:

"This boy will take one of the carriages at the station and accompany you until nightfall, to see that Juliette's horse behaves itself. I will go to-morrow morning to his master's, and will get news of you there. Good-bye, good-bye; a pleasant journey!"

A small valise bought by my father at Boulogne, held our toilet articles. My famous basket was at our feet, our luggage ticket given to Liénard, and off we started.





## XXV

### OUR HOMEWARD JOURNEY

**E**VERY detail of that delightful journey is still present to me. It seemed to me that I was undertaking something tremendous, which was going to last for an indefinite time.

The young, spirited horse delighted my father and me. He took up all our attention at first. We looked at nothing else. Ah! what was his name?

The groom told us it was Coq or Cock. He didn't know whether it was "Coq" or the English name.

"No! no, never in France, never shall England reign!" I cried, recalling the air I had heard in *Charles VI*. "It shall be Coq."

Coq almost flew along the road. After a while the groom left us, telling us the names of the villages and the post-relays where we were to stop during the day, or were to sleep at night.

My father and I recalled our longest drives around Blérancourt, but they were not like this one—a real journey. He laughed at all my observations and reflections, and said often to me: "Ah!

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## OUR HOMEWARD JOURNEY

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you are, indeed, my daughter. You resemble me more than anyone else."

We had left Amiens at eleven o'clock in the morning, and had not yet, at five o'clock in the afternoon, thought of making our first halt. We had brought some fruit and cakes, and so long as our handsome Coq was not tired we determined to continue our way.

"Juliette," said father to me, at a time when Coq was going slower, "have you never asked yourself whether I could indefinitely submit to our separation, if I could always bear the pain of seeing your mind fashioned by others than myself? My greatest ambition is to make your mind the offspring of my own. It will come some day; it must be so."

I answered nothing. I said over to myself my father's phrase: "Make your mind the offspring of my own," and I thought to myself that as I was his daughter, my whole self should be his also; but then, being grandchild of my grandmother, whom I adored, how could I be at once all my grandmother's and all my father's? The feeling I had of the difficulty brought about by my double love for my grandmother and my father, the thought of sharing myself between them, filled me with sadness, and my heart ached as I thought I should

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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feel in the future, more and more deeply, the sorrow I might cause each when I left either of them, because each would feel when I returned that I would come back with my heart and mind filled with the one whom I had left. I was still angry at my grandmother for having sold my garden. The large house at Chauny, which formerly pleased me more than the small one at Blérancourt, seemed like a prison now. The yard, full of flowers, had been gay only because it preceded the garden; cut off from it, it would look, under the shadow of the great wall they were building, like a little plot resembling those in the graveyards.

My father thought also of many sad things; our gaiety now ran away from us, and we could not regain it. All my childhood spent in that beloved garden came back to me: the springtime, with the rows of violets along the walls at its end; the summer, with the baskets of strawberries that I would run to pick myself, as we were sitting down at table; fruits of all kinds, whose growth I watched with such interest, and which I kept tasting—apples, pears, plums, cherries, and apricots, enjoying the greatest delight a child can have—that of eating to its fill all kinds of fruit throughout the whole year.

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## OUR HOMEWARD JOURNEY

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"Papa, do you approve grandmother's having sold her garden?" I asked him suddenly, determined all at once to confide my sorrow to him, without speaking of the *dot*.

"Why, yes, because she received a good price for it."

"So, in your opinion she has done well?"

"Without doubt—she would never have found such a good chance again. Perhaps, besides the question of money, she decided to do it a little for your sake."

"Oh! that is too much!"

"Why? You will have only a few steps to take to go to your school. She will even be able to see you play from a wing she wishes to build."

"Then grandmother is going to make the little yard still smaller? Well, papa, I cannot tell you the pain all this gives me. They have taken away the paths where I used to walk and play, my trees, all that I loved in immaterial things; they have deprived me of the happiness of looking at growing leaves, of studying how plants bud, how blossoms become fruit; they have prevented me from listening to the stirring and putting forth of all that has life in it, and from hearing the sigh, followed by cold silence, of that which dies. To me,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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papa, the sun is a divine being to whom I speak and who answers me in written signs, which I see in the rays of its light. I will make you half close your eyes at midday, and will show you the shining signs, the golden writing. The moon follows me as I walk, and I feel that it is a friend. I assure you, papa, I have heard the earth burst with a little sound above the asparagus heads, or when the seeds that have been sown sprout forth. I do not know how to express all this to you, or how to explain these things, but if I love to read, if books instruct me so greatly—above all, if travels make the world larger to me—I think, papa, I have learned a great deal in my garden about all small things.”

My father listened to me, his eyes fixed on mine; he held the reins so loosely in his hands that suddenly, feeling gay, or perhaps made nervous by fatigue, Coq began to behave badly for the first time. A stroke of the whip calmed him.

“This Coq,” said my father, “is unworthy of too much confidence.” Then he added:

“Go on talking, Juliette, dear, go on. You do not know the pleasure you give me. You love nature as I love it; you feel it, you poetise it as I do. Ah! old Homer is giving back to me to-day what I gave to him in teaching you to love him. It is

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## OUR HOMEWARD JOURNEY

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he who has given you the love of immaterial things. You will be a heathen some day, I am certain of it."

"Oh, papa! what an abominable thing to say! Don't repeat it, especially before grandmother—it would give her too much pain, and, besides, it isn't true; it was not the dryads, the nymphs, the homodryads, that I saw and listened to in my garden; it was really the trees, the plants, and the fruits."

"Well, well," said father, "I have promised your grandmother and your mother to let you make your first communion as they desire. They have taken your childhood from me, let them keep it; but your youth shall belong to me, and we will talk again about all this. I have now, to calm me and to make me wait patiently, the anticipation of the happy days that I foresee, and the result of all that you, my dear Juliette, have just been saying to me."

"Having my garden no longer, I must forget all that I loved and learned in it, so as not to suffer too much in having lost it," I replied. "I have so many dead things to weep over," I continued, "I have heard so many trees sigh and utter their last cry when they were cut down, that in thinking of it, I seem to hear them again and my heart



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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aches, for it is dreadful to have destroyed so many of those old companions that gave us such delicious fruit to make us love them, and it is a crime to have covered with gravel the good earth which would always have brought forth the seeds planted in it and borne harvests."

On the evening of that day my father stopped at a post-relay at a large, clean, and bright-looking inn, where I went to see a dozen chickens roasted on a spit in the kitchen. The travellers by diligence dined there.

When my father put me to sleep in one of the huge beds in our room, I was feverish, and talked all night of my garden. He prevented me from speaking of it the next day, and told me some lovely stories of Greece which he had not yet related to me.

Our journey ended without further incident, and I found grandmother wildly happy at seeing me again; but as we had arrived late at night, and as I was tired, they put me to bed at once. Grandmother wished that I should sleep near her that night, as my father had spoken of my fever, and the door having been left open, I heard him say to my grandparents:

"I don't think she can ever be consoled for having lost her garden."

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## OUR HOMEWARD JOURNEY

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“As it is clear that she will marry a country gentleman,” said grandfather, laughing, “and, as the education she is receiving from her aunts will probably incline her to marry some perfect Rousot, she will be able after her honeymoon to treat herself to some trees and grounds, so we need not pity her present unhappiness in an exaggerated manner.”

My grandparents had quarrelled, as usual, during my absence. I had the proof of it in grandmother’s answer. The “they” and “one” which I had nearly banished, had returned to their conversation.

“*One* is always joking,” she said, “even about what touches me the most—Juliette’s sorrow. Since I have seen how much she suffers from being deprived of her garden, I reproach myself bitterly for having taken it from her. *One* should understand that, and not laugh, when *one* knows that I would not have run the risk of giving pain to Juliette without having been moved by a feeling which was in her interest, but which I cannot express to everybody.”

“Well, well,” grandfather replied, “*one* has no need of a lesson; *one* loves *one’s* grandchild as much as mother and father and grandmother. *One* only jokes about Juliette’s sorrow, and *one* will

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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continue to do so for the simple reason that *one* thinks it will be the best way to console her."

My grandmother's regrets calmed my grief, but my poor grandfather was snubbed many times for his way of "consoling" me.





## XXVI

### MY FIRST COMMUNION

**I**T is impossible to imagine to-day the importance of a railway journey in the time of my childhood. All Chauny talked of it when I started; all Chauny questioned me concerning it on my return. When I went out with grandfather, people stopped me in the street to ask me if a railway journey was very frightful.

Truth to tell, the horrible whistles, the deafening threatening noise of the locomotives, the tunnels (oh, those tunnels!), the frightful black smoke that made one look like a coal-man in a few hours, had filled me with apprehension, and everything connected with it seemed to me like something coming straight from hell.

"It splits your ears, it blinds you if you put your nose out of the window, it shakes you so that you tremble, it is ugly and makes you ugly," I replied to everyone who questioned me.

At school I had a great success. All the big girls asked me about it, to satisfy their own curiosity and that of their families. All the little girls

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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wished to know the entire history of the railway journey, and all about the sea and the ships.

My large basket of shells was emptied in a few days. The numberless presents I had brought disappeared quickly. A week after my return I had nothing left. "Those," I said, speaking of my shells, "were not bought. I picked them up myself by the sea, the real sea!"

These words produced an immense sensation. At recreations I held forth, surrounded by numerous listeners with eager eyes and open mouths. Questions came from all sides. They never tired of hearing my stories told over and over again. The history of the woman beheaded in the tunnel made them all tremble.

"Why did she look out of the window?" asked the big girls. "One should take great care in travelling, for there is always great risk. One has only to read about it to know it."

The little girls asked especially whether the beheaded woman had children and whether they were with her. When I answered, "yes," there was a general panic, and the whole brood scattered, with frightened "ohs!"

If a schoolgirl of to-day had passed the winter at the North Pole, and should relate to her school-mates that she had seen a mother crushed to death

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## MY FIRST COMMUNION

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by an iceberg before her children's eyes, she would not produce a greater sensation than I did with my story of the railway and the unfortunate woman in the tunnel. They were beginning to build the railway from Paris to Saint-Quentin, which was to pass through Chauny, and everyone was wildly excited over the matter. I had, with great art, planned a course of entertainment to be given at home. Every evening, after dinner, I related to my grandparents, to Blondeau, and to my friend Charles—who would not have missed it for anything in the world—the history of one of my days of travel—never more and never less than one; and the number of my stories just covered the number of days of the journey.

I had missed a whole month of the catechism class, but the vicar was indulgent. He was, himself, much interested in my excursion, and asked me, like everyone else, to give him my impressions about the railroad and the sea.

My reflections pleased him, and he spoke of them to the dean, who also questioned me. I told him that the railroad was an abominable, whistling invention—it seemed like hell, with its fire and its diabolical blackness.

This journey gave me a decided pre-eminence. On account of it, I was considered at Chauny su-

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perior to the other young girls of my age. As the time for first communion approached, the dean interested himself especially in me. He selected me to pronounce the baptismal vows, and to head one of the files of communicants to the Holy Table. The Bishop of Soissons came that year, as he did every two years, to administer confirmation, and I was selected to make him the complimentary speech of welcome at the parsonage.

I was the youngest and the tallest of the communicants. My grandparents, Blondeau, and my friend Charles, when the history of my journey was finished, busied themselves exclusively about my first communion. Grandmother had ordered the finest muslin for my gown and veil. They said white was very becoming to me, and that I should be the prettiest girl of all. My friend Charles taught me how to say my baptismal vows and my complimentary speech to the Bishop, in a manner rather more theatrical than pious.

I had then as an intimate friend a strange girl of my own age, as small as I was tall, witty, sharp-tongued, and mischievous, whose influence over me was anything but good. Whenever she saw me enthusiastic or admiring anything, she did her best to spoil what I admired. Her name was Maribert.\*

\* The final syllable only is correct.

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## MY FIRST COMMUNION

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We had been friends for four years, but we had had very serious quarrels and reconciliations, which interested the whole school.

Maribert was to make her first communion at the same time as myself. She was a boarder at the school and was very strictly watched because she criticised the catechism in a way which shocked the least devout. She often argued with the vicar, contending with him in discussing the articles of faith he was explaining to us.

"You will be cast out of the church if you do not submit," the vicar said to her one day. "You have a renegade's mind."

And she dared to reply:

"I am a philosopher, I am strong-minded!"

I went to board at school during the month preceding my first communion, the dean, finding I was not preparing myself well for the ceremony at my grandparents', induced them to let me absent myself from home until the great day. Maribert had succeeded in having me for neighbour in the dormitory, and she kept by me at recreations. During class hours, by the means of little notes, which she would slip into my hands, she tried to influence my mind to unbelief. She endeavoured to prove to me that the dean was in no wise evangelical; that the vicar, who instructed us, preferred a good din-



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ner to a good mass; that the Mlles. André, our mistresses, were much more interested in not losing their pupils than in teaching and improving them.

“Now, as to myself,” she said, “they should send me away; they know very well that I change all the ideas I wish to change; that I am a disturber; that I shall not make my first communion seriously; that I will prevent others—you, first of all—from making it with the necessary unction and devotion; and yet they keep me here—me, the black sheep of the flock!”

I was badly influenced by Maribert, and they would have done better to have me with grandmother, who, although at this time too occupied with the things of this world to give me great spiritual help, would have done all she could to increase my faith.

The morning of the day of my first communion I was sad, discontented, I did not feel as I should have felt, and I envied the happiness of those who, having had the strength to resist Maribert’s diabolical influence, wore on their faces an expression of beatitude. As we were leaving for the church, Maribert slipped a piece of chocolate into my hand, saying, with her shining, demoniacal eyes looking at me: “Eat it!”

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## MY FIRST COMMUNION

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And, at the same time, I heard her crunching the half of the piece she had given to me.

I threw the chocolate in her face. Ah, no! that was too much! I, too, wanted to be strong-minded, but I did not wish to commit a sacrilege, to lie, to receive communion after having eaten.

I suddenly realised my friend's evil-doing, and I struggled instantly to wrench out from my mind the ideas she had implanted in it; they were not numerous, however, for we possessed but few tastes in common. However, a great sadness took possession of me; had I not broken with a confidante, a friend of four years' standing? (Years are so long in childhood!)

Maribert, alas! had made me lose enthusiasm for prayer, and that enthusiasm alone, on such a day as this, could have consoled me for the heart-ache I suffered. I was overcome to such a degree that my tears fell without my knowing it.

"You are sillier than the silliest," Maribert said to me. "I will never speak to you again as long as I live."

"You are more wicked than the wickedest," I replied, "and I shall reproach myself as long as I exist for having loved one so accursed as you."

The hour came for leaving for the church. Our mothers were waiting for us in the drawing-room.

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My mother and my grandmother were there. I threw myself in their arms and kissed them fervently. They were much edified in seeing my pal-lor and my red eyes. My grandmother wore a white woollen gown, a black bonnet, and a black silk scarf trimmed with fringe. I thought her very well dressed. My mother looked very handsome, although her toilette was extremely simple. She wore a large Leghorn straw bonnet, tied with black velvet ribbons, a puce-coloured silk gown with a train, and on her shoulders a scarf beautifully embroidered by herself, fastened with turquoise pins. I could not cease from admiring her.

“How beautiful mamma is,” I said in a low tone to grandmother. “Just look at her.”

“Yes,” grandmother replied aloud, “and it would be well if she would take pleasure in her beauty, if she would be grateful to God for it; but, alas! I am sure she imagines people look at her maliciously.”

My mother shrugged her shoulders.

“Juliette,” added grandmother, “this is a happy day for you, my little girl; may it govern your whole life; may you understand its religious significance. I shall pray to God with my whole soul that it may be so.”

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## MY FIRST COMMUNION

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We left the school, I at the head of the procession, my schoolmates following me one by one. We formed a file and walked through the streets to the church. The organ ushered us in with a peal of gladness. My heart beat so hard it hurt me. But by degrees a great calmness came over me. I abjured evil; I banished Maribert from my heart. I saw her farther down in the file, her face made ugly by a wicked smile. I looked at her coldly and proudly, and I raised my eyes to Heaven to prove to her that I was no longer under the influence of her wicked teaching. I felt as it was proper I should feel in the holy place and in view of the ceremony in which I was to take part.

I recited my baptismal vows simply, in a loud voice, feeling sincerely what I said. I thought of grandmother, who was listening to me and to whom I would that very night confess all that I had hidden from her about Maribert. I made my communion in peace, I returned to grandmother's house happy in being at home again, freed from Maribert, whom I felt I would never miss again when absent from her.

The next day I was to recite my complimentary speech to the bishop at the parsonage. Grandfather had said that Monseigneur de Garsignies had been a former cavalry officer, and grandmother

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had added that he had had a very adventurous, romantic life. My grandparents' remarks about him at table took away all my fear of him.

I repeated my address, smiling and looking at him unembarrassed. He smiled, too, and kissed me.

At the church, during the ceremony of confirmation, when I kissed the paten and Monseigneur approached his fingers to my face, Maribert's influence suddenly took possession of me again, and I said, without being conscious of the words I pronounced, words which froze with horror my schoolmates, kneeling near me, and which made Maribert laugh:

"Lightly, Monseigneur, I beg of you!"

He tapped my cheek harder than he tapped those of my schoolmates. Why did I say it? I do not know, but I felt that I had resisted a diabolical desire to say something worse. The sacred gesture suddenly seemed to me like a slap in my face. Maribert was kneeling at a short distance from me. Was it her wicked spirit which had inspired me with this act of revolt?

The dean called me to the sacristy after the confirmation, and scolded me in a severe but fatherly manner, and gave me a penance to perform.

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A few years afterwards, at an evening party given at Soissons, where I had arrived as a young bride, Monseigneur de Garsignies, as I entered the room and bowed to him, exclaimed:

“The little girl whom I confirmed!”





## XXVII

### WE DISCUSS FRENCH LITERATURE

**T**HE school-house in our old garden had been built during the summer months. It was now being finished with all possible haste. The school was to be reopened in October in the new building. One could see the odious structure above the high wall, for which I felt a violent hatred. In the evening large fires were lit in it, which I could see from the hall leading to my room on the first story, and they looked to me like the mouth of the infernal regions.

I continually declared that I would never, never, go to that school, and it was in vain that grandmother and my mother, at the family dinner given on the day of my first communion, endeavoured to make me promise I would go to the new school in October. My father was not present at the dinner, for he disapproved of, although he submitted to, what he called the continuation of my baptism. I literally lost my head when I thought that I might be obliged to repeat my lessons over the destroyed ground of my garden, or play over the place where my "temple of verdure" had been.

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Grandmother was distressed at my obstinacy, and perhaps was even more irritated by it. Our affection suffered from all this, and we hurt each other's feelings often in spite of the deep love we bore each other. I took no more interest in my dear grandparents' happiness; I stood between them no longer; I kept silence when a discussion arose; the impersonal pronouns were frequently used again. Blondeau was sad over my grief, and I was all the more unhappy because Maribert excited ill-feeling against me at school, keeping up a relentless fight. There were two hostile camps. The girls were either on her side or on mine. Her party was full of activity, tormenting us, playing us all manner of bad tricks; mine resisted indolently, because I, their head, was discouraged, and worked no longer. I was constantly scolded and punished. I became ill-tempered, I, whom my companions had loved until then especially on account of my good humour. I could no longer, as formerly, bring them fruit from my garden. The sugar-plums were a thing of the past; in a word, I was undone and did not care for anything.

My visit to my aunts at Chivres, where I recovered a little serenity, was shorter than usual that year. My vacation was to be no longer than that given by the school, and my father claimed his



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share of it. I had hardly finished the story of my journey, day by day, to my aunts, I had scarcely told all about my first communion, when I should have been obliged to leave, had I not obtained a prolongation of my stay for a month more, by writing to my father imploring him to keep me when the school opened in October, and to spare me the grief of going into the new building at that time.

Aunt Sophie scolded me a great deal for my laziness and negligence regarding the study of Latin. But she accepted my excuses, and I began again to work with good will.

I found my aunts much excited over politics. They read *Le National*, and all three, as well as my great-grandmother, were Liberals. They talked continually of Odilon Barrot, and with the greatest respect for him. They had their individual opinions about each member of the royal family. They mourned the death of the Duke of Orléans; loved the Duke d'Aumale and the Prince de Joinville; esteemed Queen Amélie, but judged King Louis Philippe severely, and raised their arms to heaven when speaking of the corruption of the times. If they had been less afraid of the revolution, they would have dethroned the King, proclaimed the Duchess of Orléans as the Regent, and

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## WE DISCUSS FRENCH LITERATURE

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prepared the reign of the little Count of Paris, with Odilon Barrot as President of the Council.

My aunts considered Odilon Barrot "the model representative." They were enthusiastic about the reformist banquets, of which he was at once the promoter and the hero.

But they were irritated over the "doings" of Ledru-Rollin, Louis Blanc, and others, who altered the nature and changed the object of the reformist banquets; they were anxious about Pierre Leroux's revolutionary ideas concerning work, and Proudhon's insane theories about property. Apropos of these two individuals and their opinions they would exclaim:

"It is the end of the world!"

When my aunts were discussing these matters, they declared themselves faithful to "immortal principles." They were enemies of Napoleon I., less, however, than of Jacobites and Socialists, but they could not forgive him for the entrance of the allies into France, nor for the terrors of the invasion.

They taught me Auguste Barbier's famous iambic: "*O Corse à cheveux plats, que la France étoit belle,*" so that I might repeat it to grandfather.

"Bonaparte," my great-grandmother at Chivres

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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said, as my father had also said, "gave us back France smaller than he took it."

They were not fond of Béranger, and when I sang his songs which grandfather had taught me they listened, but made protestations against the poet and the song. M. Thiers seemed dangerous to them, with his worship of Napoleon, who Bonapartised the *bourgeoisie*, while Béranger Bonapartised the people.

"And," said aunt Sophie, "whatever may be the form of government we shall have after this of Louis Philippe, authoritative ideas, I am afraid, will triumph. Liberalism, which can alone save France, which can give her her political existence, and make her benefit by the intelligence of her race, seems to exist only in Odilon Barrot's mind and in de Lamartine's writings."

They read and re-read his *Les Girondins*, and the manner in which they spoke of it remains ineffaceably in my memory.

"The old provincialism of France must be re-awakened, the country must be governed by a great number of administrative seats; there must be decentralisation; France must return to the Girondist programme and struggle against the exclusive influence of the capital, against the autocracy of new ideas, more oppressing, more tyranni-

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## WE DISCUSS FRENCH LITERATURE

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cal than the tyrants themselves"—this was my aunts' and my great-grandmother's political programme, which they made me write out in order to communicate it to my parents and grandparents.

"You will keep it, Juliette," aunt Sophie said to me one day, "for there will come a moment in your life, I am certain, when, after Jacobite and Bonapartist experiences, after probable revolutions, you will remember how wise and truly French and nationalist were your old aunts' ideas. France should act from her centres of action, and not revolve like a top, in her capital."

My aunts had never talked politics together before me so much as during my vacation in 1847.

"You are wearying that child," great-grandmother would say, to which one or the other of her daughters would reply: "She is old enough to listen and to understand."

"It will not be useless to you should you have to listen—not with your ears, but with your mouth yawning—to know what such persons of high competency—as your aunts think of public affairs," said aunt Constance, with her habitual mockery. "So listen, Juliette, listen!"

I listened without yawning, for my mind was open to all political and literary things. My aunts were the personification of that *bourgeoise*

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class, of whom my father spoke, who admitted only the medium way in social experiments, who cared only for average impressions—"natures insupportably equibalanced," he would say.

My aunts found Victor Hugo too sonorous, too resounding for their calm minds. Aunt Sophie said he was "not sufficiently bucolic." They detested Quasimodo's ugliness, criticised the *Ode à la Colonne Napoleon II.*, which seemed to make Victor Hugo a Bonapartist; they found his plays too intense, too pompously improbable, too wordily humanitarian. *Lucrèce Borgia*, *Marie Tudor*, *Les Burgraves*, *Ruy Blas*, put them out of patience. Their classicalism was revolted. They blamed his political conduct, too oscillating and too diverse. Aunt Anastasie implored grace for his *Les Rayons et les Ombres*, in which she delighted.

They spoke of Mme. George Sand with reserve. I heard more exclamations than approbation about her novel, *Lélia*, whose pretty name I remembered, as I had seen the book in grandmother's hands. But they liked many of Mme. George Sand's writings, especially those on peasant life. *La Petite Fadette* they considered a chef-d'œuvre.

"We are very *bourgeoise*," said aunt Sophie, when speaking of Mme. George Sand, "although

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## WE DISCUSS FRENCH LITERATURE

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our minds are emancipated by liberalism more than by education, and from regarding public acts more than private actions. Juliette, remember the name of this writer, George Sand," she added. "She will have a great influence on your generation, and you will certainly be enthusiastic about her when you are of age. No matter what is said of her, Mme. George Sand has remained very womanly, and she will never really be understood except by women; but the greater part of the things she has written, outside of her stories of peasant life, are suited to younger minds than ours, which she must delight, and which she certainly reflects. It is easier for us to understand Mme. de Staël and her *Corinne*." And my aunts initiated me in the beauty, so dissimilar, of Mme. de Staël's *Corinne* and Mme. George Sand's *La Petite Fadette*. I found, to their delight, the two books equally admirable, though in a different way. It is true they read them aloud to me, pointing out what I should admire; but my aunts, in spite of my affection for them, and the great confidence I felt in their intelligence, would never have made me enthusiastic about them if I had not myself felt their power.

My grandmother, who adored Balzac, used frequently to read to me long extracts from his works,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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which I found tedious. She had finally renounced trying to make me like her dear, her great, her unique novel-writer. I sometimes vexed her by saying:

“He is neither Homeric nor Virgilian enough.”

My aunts detested Balzac.

“He is a creator of unwholesome characters,” said aunt Anastasie; “the heroes of Monsieur de Balzac can easily enter into one’s life and lead one to live in the same manner in which they live themselves. They are so real that you think you have known them; they take possession of me when I read one of his novels. I cannot free my mind of people whom I do not like, whose acts I blame, and who impose themselves on my judgment, as an ugly fashion is sometimes imposed on well-dressed women. I am convinced that Balzac will form even more characters than those he has painted. I fear that my sister Pélagie acts under his influence oftener than she is aware. If you let yourself be captured by that man’s power, he possesses you, and he is an ill-doer who leads you to doubt, to be sceptical about people and things.”

“Take care, my niece, of Monsieur de Balzac, later in life,” added aunt Constance, “he is the most dangerous of all writers of the present day. He will create contemporaries for you, whom I do

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not envy you; egoists, people athirst for position. Remember what your old aunt has said to you—even write it down: Balzac will engender brains, but never consciences nor hearts. To Balzac, virtue is an imbecility. *Eugénie Grandet* and *Le Père Goriot* revolt me. I do not even make an exception of the *Lys dans la Vallée*.”

Ah! if grandmother, who was a fanatic about him, had been there, what passion she would have thrown into those discussions about Monsieur de Balzac with her sisters. I told my aunts that when I left Chauny grandmother was reading *Les deux Jeunes Mariées* for the fifth time.

Aunt Sophie dictated to me a criticism of de Balzac's works, which I read to grandmother on my return. She became angry and made me reply to her sister in her name. I had thus two contradictory lessons on de Balzac and I remember them both.

De Balzac was a whole world to grandmother. Through him, and with him, one could exclude the banality of social intercourse from one's existence. One lived with his heroes as if they were friends; they were flesh and blood. One talked with them, saw them; they peopled one's existence, they came and visited one.

I wrote pages on pages to aunt Sophie about de



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Balzac. She replied to grandmother, and then began a correspondence between the two sisters on the literature of the day, which was communicated to me whenever it could be, and which instructed me about many works of the time that were vibrating with interest.

My aunt and grandmother agreed in disapproving of the writings of Eugène Suë, who taught the people to hate priests by his portrayal of the character of Rodin.

Grandmother sought distraction in her readings; aunt Sophie sought reflection. The one was interested only in lovers' adventures, the other in the elegant forms in which thought was clad, in descriptions of nature, in the philosophy of life. They never understood each other nor agreed about any work whatever.





## XXVIII

### WE TALK ABOUT POLITICS

**H**AVING reached my eleventh year, I was quite convinced that I had become a young lady. Many persons thought me older than I really was on account of my height and my serious demeanour. My ideas at this time were very pronounced, but not always matured; my imagination ran wild; I was as simple as a child and I reasoned like a young woman. Nearly all of those who heretofore had treated me like a child, now called me "Mademoiselle," and grandmother, desirous to justify the name, lengthened my skirts considerably, and I wore them almost quite long.

I stayed with grandmother nearly a week between my return from Chivres and my sojourn with my father, and my head was full of the literature of the day, and I now had my own opinions on Mme. de Staël, Mme. George Sand, Victor Hugo, de Balzac, and Eugène Suë. I had a book full of interrogative notes for my father, who had talked to me only of the ancient or "democratic and social authors," as he called them. While I was at Chauny I put all these notes in order, and they

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were interesting from the fact that the greater part of them had been gathered from my aunts' conversation.

I wondered whether my father would consent to discuss the literature of the day with me. My knowledge would assuredly surprise him, but did he even know the authors about whom I wished to talk with him? But as aunt Sophie, in spite of her love for Virgil and the Latin writers, was still much interested in the celebrities of the day, I thought that my father, too, might perhaps unite a taste for literature with his love of politics.

As soon as I arrived at Blérancourt I bombarded him with questions. What did he think of Mme. de Staël, of Mme. George Sand, of Victor Hugo, of de Lamartine, of de Balzac? My mother thought it scandalous that I should be allowed to read and criticise authors of whom she knew scarcely anything. Really, our family was quite crazy; even my aunts, whom she had always heard spoken of as sensible women, were more old-fashioned than modernised. My mother used to say that if she had brought me up she would have made a simple housewife of me, educated to live in her circle and to think like other people, and not a pedantic, unbearable child, already thrown out of her sphere by the training of her mind, and with her intelli-

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## WE TALK ABOUT POLITICS

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gence overheated at an age when it should have been set on calm foundations.

My father quite looked down on the literature of his own day. He answered my questions with commonplaces. Lamartine alone excited him, in the way of blame, not in his character of poet, but as a historian, and he declared that *Les Girondins* was the work of a "malefactor." His admiration of Eugène Suë was so exaggerated that it would have made aunt Sophie repeat one of her favourite sayings: "There are some opinions which are crimes."

"Eugène Suë," said my father, "is a genius; he will deliver France from all the Rodins; a new epoch will begin from his influence, an epoch when our country will at last be delivered from the church; Eugène Suë has moulded the soft clay of which the people are still made; some other man will obtain hard marble from this same people on which to sculpture his ideas. Events in our day move rapidly forward. The great renovators have prepared all which they intend to renovate, definite freedom." He added solemnly: "We are at last at liberty to speak of things of which you are as yet ignorant, and which I can now disclose to you. No one now can hinder me from forming your understanding on the same pattern

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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as my own. You have been instructed concerning the religion of your grandmother and your mother; I can now talk to you of mine without hindrance; teach you and show you from whence comes light to the minds and hearts of men. It comes from nature; it is real because we can see it; it is ideal from the vast expanse it illuminates."

The next day my father began to teach me what he called my new catechism, and gave me in dictation the principal articles. Here are a few of the pages which I have kept:

"The worship of nature, which we have received from the Greeks, the only people who ever penetrated the depths of its mystery—a worship transmitted to us through uninterrupted centuries, which Jean Jacques Rousseau has taught us in his admirable language to understand, and of which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has given us the sentimentality—is the only true worship.

"Nature, Science, Humanity, are the three terms of initiation. First comes nature, which rules everything; then the revelations of nature, revelations which mean science—that is to say, phenomena made clear in themselves and observed by man; and lastly, the appropriation of phenomena for useful social purposes.

"The times are moving fast, the dawn is becom-

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ing light. Nature reveals herself more and more to us; the future is bright. A general spirit of fraternity prevails. Nature, which Christianity calls our enemy, gives herself wholly to man to aid him in his efforts to traverse the world by steam, to question the stars, and to discover intact the vestiges of by-gone times, which she has preserved for him.

“If Christianity has endeavoured to break the bonds between man and nature, Jesus, the immortal Christ, has drawn men together. He said to them: ‘You are brethren; there is no caste, no race, no religion, no history, no art, no morals, that are not the universal patrimony of humanity.’

“It seems to me,” said my father, “when I think of the beauty of things, of the harmony one can discover, where blinded persons see only antagonism, that my enjoyment of life is increased five-fold. One single epoch can alone be compared to our time,—that of the birth of Christianity. Christ, who brought with Him the republican formulas of equality and fraternity, preached the ‘good word’ to the people as we preach it. Soon we too shall become apostles. Jesus freed what He called souls; we shall free the social person by adding liberty to equality and fraternity.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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“A Ledru-Rollin, a Louis Blanc, are the continuators of Christianity. The poor man who has won his rights by the great revolution, must be the one to impose duty on the higher classes; the worker must have a right to his work, and the rich man must be bound to furnish him with work.

“The right to work is the most absolute of all rights, but by no means the only one. The most miserable creature, because he is a man, has a right to education and to his share of government. There is no error in nature, no perversity in man; evil comes only from society, which piles up errors and wicked sophisms. The renovating forces of the future will therefore attack society and the middle class, which governs society for its own exclusive benefit. Juliette! Juliette! I intend to make you an ardent advocate for the general good and happiness of humanity. I cannot tell why, but I fancy that your heart, like my own, will be able to desire passionately the elevation of the masses; for even now you speak to a workman, to a peasant, or to a poor man, as if he were your equal.

“I, you see, love the humble, those who are on the lower steps of life, more than I do myself; the sight of those who suffer, those who struggle, and are overcome by everything, simply tortures my,

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heart. We must give all of ourselves to those who have nothing. If many people felt in this way, there would be far fewer ills to comfort and less misery to be helped. The poor have only the vice of their poverty, the inferiority of their social standing.

“A rich and superior man who has defects is culpable, and those who are vicious are monsters; whereas the destitute who are faulty and vicious, have every excuse and every right to be absolved.

“Real piety consists in giving one’s indulgences, one’s help, and one’s love to the wretched, not in limited charity, circumscribed to material relief, but with a broad humanity.”

My heart melted at these words, and, as my father’s acts were always in accordance with what he said, he moved every fibre of sensibility I possessed.

“A republic alone can give to men the greatest of all precious things: the liberty of their rights and their duties,” said my father, “allowing them the free expansion of their faculties for human benefaction. It alone can distribute instruction unreservedly and impose education by example.

“Socialist - republican principles endow every man, every citizen, with a dogma of pride which assures his moral value. If a man be a socialist-



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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republican, he finds within himself the exact level of his scope of faculties, which in no wise oppress the scope of other person's faculties."

And then came endless preaching. My father's conviction, sincere faith, and absolute certainty of the truth of his ideas, gave him such persuasive eloquence that no child of eleven could resist, especially one whom he treated as a beloved disciple.

One evening my father solemnly gave me a small guide entitled, "Twenty-one short precepts on the duties of a sincere Socialist-republican," which Saint Paul would not have disavowed. He had composed it for me and for his peasant and workingmen proselytes.





## XXIX

### TALKS ABOUT NATURE

**I** WAS very fond of play, but, as I took my rôle of socialist-republican disciple so much in earnest, I seized every opportunity, like my father, of preaching its doctrines.

In the evenings, after dinner, which we took rather early, the children of the neighbourhood used to gather under the lime trees, in the large square, which was situated near our house. Our elders sat and chatted with one another, while the boys and girls, myself at the head, played at revolution. The sons and daughters of the parents whom my father had "converted" were all on my side, while the lukewarm, or ignorant, usually received chastisement, or finally came over to our party.

While my father crammed my mind with politics, he did not forget to foster my passion for nature, the smallest manifestations of which he deified. He delighted in proving to me that it was useless for man to seek beyond nature for unattainable chimeras, for the infinite which our

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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finite conception was unable to understand, and for the immaterial, which our materiality can never satisfactorily explain. He laid particular stress on this point; he unveiled to me all the great and small laws of life and movement, both those which rule the motion of the universe so splendidly, and those which govern the world of ants, whose ways and manners he had already taught me. But the great demonstrations furnished by ants, however much they impressed my mind, always made me laugh, for this reason: An old neighbour of ours, Madame Viet, seemed to have but one occupation in life, that of destroying ants, and but one subject of conversation, the "frumions" (as she called them, in *patois*) which she had scalded during the day, and whose dead bodies she kept, whenever she could, to count them at night, either in imagination or in reality. As soon as she would appear outside her door, after a very curt "good-morning" to her neighbours, she would start a long conversation about the ants. In all the neighbourhood and at home we all joked about Madame Viet and the quantity of ants she destroyed.

Her granddaughter, whose father was a large farmer in the adjacent country, was one of my schoolmates at Chauny; she spent a few days of

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## TALKS ABOUT NATURE

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each week during the holidays with her grandmother, and was the first to laugh about the ants. Whenever I went to see Saint-Just's sister, Madame Decaisne and the Chevalier, I was always asked for news of our friend and her "frumions." The more she killed the more they reappeared in greater numbers; it really seemed as if they were brought by someone during the night into her courtyard.

We had some beehives, and I delighted in watching their daily, never-varying work, about which my old Homer had sung thousands of years before. My father, desiring to convince me that men and animals are what we make them by kindness and education, taught me, little by little, how to tame my bees. I used to take them sugar and flowers, and they never stung me.

"It is because you love them," said my father, "and they know it well."

I was as fond of my Blérancourt bees as of my Chauny pigeons, and came to know their ways, their work, their tastes, and their organisation. I used to talk to them, and they understood me as well as did my pigeons.

"You see," said my father, "nature amply suffices for the need of observation, of sociability and love which exists in man. He is, himself, the con-

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scious reflection of the whole life of the universe. If you wish to worship something, worship the sun, the God that gives you life, that surrounds you with heat, that illuminates all things, and, under whose rays, everything grows, everything comes to life and palpitates."

Under the powerful and incessant pressure of my father's mind, I gradually came to see everything from his point of view. Anyone mentioning the words "apostleship" or "holiness," would at once have made me think of my father, whose charity and kindness were without bounds.

I was unwilling to return to Chauny and to the school, now occupying the place of my beloved lost garden. I begged my father to delay my departure from Blérancourt, under pretext of my studying with him. He had begun with me a course of Greek history which he desired to finish. He was perfecting me as a "poetess," and the verses I sent to grandmother, who was very fond of poetry, were considered much superior to my first attempts, both by Blondeau and my friend Charles. In this way I reached Christmas, and the impress of both republicanism and paganism became more and more developed in my mind. My father's ideas fell into ground already prepared for them by heredity. And then, who could have

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## TALKS ABOUT NATURE

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resisted so much warmth of heart, such a passionate love of the beautiful and the good?

Winter set in very severely at the end of October, and we met so many poorly clad people on the roads that my father and I felt ashamed of our warm clothing, and it often happened that we returned home without wraps or shoes. My mother, who was also charitable, but in a sensible way, gave away only warm clothing; and she would abuse my father and scold me for being as foolish as he was.

Liénard had given back to me my large travelling-purse, and begged to be allowed to offer me the little things we had bought together at Boulogne-sur-Mer. This money was of the greatest use to us for our poor, but it was soon exhausted.

My father would have spent millions had he possessed them. He could not be trusted with money, for he gave it instantly away.

My mother, who had carefully saved up the money for the tilbury, sent it to Liénard, knowing well that if she confided it to my father he would without fail give it to the poor, and not replace his worn-out carriage. He was, however, most desirous of having a new one, the old carriage being much too heavy when the wheels were covered with mud, which was the case eight months

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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out of the year, on the badly kept roads around Blérancourt at that time.

My mother never allowed my father any loose money; but if his patients' bills were small at Decaisne's, the chemist, a nephew of Saint-Just, when the end of each month came, there were painful surprises for my mother's slender purse, when the butcher, the baker, and grocer had to be paid. Added to this, my father often found that people were too poor to pay for his visits. If he did not grow rich, he at least grew in influence, and his republican proselytes numbered hundreds. Blérancourt was now becoming a centre of violent agitation. The most revolutionary pamphlets were read there; a large fair was held in the town every month, and my father's ideas reached all the surrounding villages; the propaganda became more and more active. Nothing was talked of but reforms, progress, the lowering of the census, the accession to political life, not only of the educated class, but also of the lower classes.

In my letters to grandmother I told her, of course, as cleverly as I could, of my new opinions, but only of those of republican tendency and touching upon nature. Without discussing them, she answered that she was anxious about me, that, becoming republican first, I would surely become a

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socialist, and, from being a worshipper of nature, turn pagan and atheist, like my father; that it was the logical outcome of such an education, and that there was no escaping it. She added that my father was disloyal to her in destroying in my mind what she had implanted there.







### XXX

#### A SERIOUS ACCIDENT

**D**URING the first days of December an excited correspondence about me began between my father and my grandmother, which increased in violence. She declared she would not consent to my staying away until Christmas; that she had been deprived of my presence too long; that I was her sole reason for living, and that she insisted on my returning to her at the end of the week we had just begun.

"If you do not send her back to me," wrote grandmother, "I shall alter my will; you will have nothing, and Juliette can wait for the *dot* you will save up for her."

This was my father's answer:

"I am preparing her to marry a workman!"

When my father told me his answer, I said to him:

"That is a joke, is it not?"

"No," he answered, "it is my dearest wish."

"It is not mine!" I answered curtly. "I would give up my life for our cause, but I have no taste for the slow torture of married life out of my own sphere."

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## A SERIOUS ACCIDENT

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"Juliette!"

"It is true, papa, and I will never, never marry a man who is my inferior."

"Well, where is your theory of equality?"

"Equality of rights—yes, papa, I believe in that with all my heart, but equality in manners and ways of life—no, never!"

My father was angry and I was sulky.

During the day a cartload of wood was brought to the door, and, fearing a fall of snow, my father, my mother, and myself helped to carry in the logs. As I stooped to pick some up in my arms, my father, taking up one of the logs, gave me such a blow that I screamed with pain. I stood up and found the blood flowing from my temple and left eye. My father, under the impression that he had destroyed my eye, had one of his fits of madness. His only fault was his extreme violence of temper. In one of his rages he had killed a dog of whom he was very fond. In another, because his brother-in-law, a man as tall and as strong as himself, had somewhat roughly treated his wife, my father's sister, he would have killed him also, if they had not been separated.

He brandished his log of wood furiously, and cried out:

"I would rather see my daughter dead than liv-

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ing with only one eye! I shall kill her and myself afterwards!"

My mother tried in vain to hold him back. The gardener endeavoured to wrest the log from him. I suffered intensely. I was half blinded, and I, too, thought my eye was gone. I was not afraid of death; I was only afraid that my father would commit the crime of killing himself and me.

It was a horrible moment. I was paralysed, but, seeing that my father was on the point of escaping from my mother and the gardener, I rushed into the house, and with all my might held the door shut which separated my father from the crime he was about to commit.

My mother kept crying out to him that he would end on the scaffold and dishonour his family. Blattier, the gardener, besought him, saying: "Monsieur Lambert, as good as you are, you are surely not going to do such a dreadful thing!"

I mastered myself, and said to my father in calm tones, through the door:

"Very well, papa, you mean to kill me, but let me first go upstairs for a minute to wash my eye and see whether it is really gone."

I let go the door—it did not open. My father, who was struggling against their terrified suppli-

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## A SERIOUS ACCIDENT

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cations, was dumfounded at the sound of my calm voice. He let fall his log of wood, and leaned against the wall, and, from my little room, where I was bathing my eye, I could hear his sobs and cries of grief.

My heart stood still when I turned up my eyelid. My eyebrow was cut open, but I could see. I folded a wet handkerchief over the wound with one hand, and ran to my father. I looked angrily at him. I was furious with him for not knowing how to master his violent temper, and I felt that but for my calmness, the presence of mind of a mere child, he would have killed me.

"You see," I said, coldly, "my eye is not put out. It would have been useless to kill me. Only my eyebrow is cut, and I am going to Decaisne's to have it dressed."

"Juliette!" cried both of my parents. I did not heed them, but ran to Decaisne. I told him I had hurt myself and that my father was so nervous about it he was unable to treat the wound.

Grandmother arrived next day to take me away. I had not spoken a single word to my father, or answered any of his questions, for I thought that he deserved severe blame.

Grandmother never guessed anything of the truth about this lamentable event, but she thought

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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me feverish. I told her quite naturally before my father, how I had hurt myself, and she never gave a second thought to such a simple fact as the sudden shutting of a door on me, which was the version I gave her. My father winced under my protecting lies. I think he would have much preferred a scene of violent reproach to my calm indulgence.

I kissed him coldly as I left. Tears ran down his face, which induced grandmother to give him a passionate embrace.

"Come, my son," she said, "we will divide her, and each take half, for she belongs solely to us."

My mother at these words grew angry with me.

"You are clever enough to make yourself beloved," she said in my ear, kissing me coldly, "but I do not see what you gain by the exaggerated love you inspire. Remember the log of wood!"

Grandmother got into the carriage. My father heard my mother's last words, and was about to give way once more to his violent temper, but calmed himself, and said to me, kissing me with all his heart:

"Juliette, my darling child, forgive me!"





## XXXI

“LIBERTY, EQUALITY, AND FRATERNITY”

**W**HEN I stayed with my father I missed my grandmother—her liveliness, her fancies, her caprices, her gracious tenderness, and her maternal feeling. Grandfather’s wit amused and rested me, and to be without Blondeau’s devotion and my friend Charles’s admiration was a great deprivation. But as soon as I returned to grandmother I felt myself an orphan. I was nervous, my mind was empty, I was stupefied, and became more childlike, more enervated, less fit for “the struggle for life,” a phrase which grandfather indulged in too frequently and used on all occasions.

These allusions to the “struggle for life” sometimes came up in such a droll manner in conversation that they made us all laugh, but I often thought that these same struggles did really exist, and were anything but droll. Had I not already experienced them? The memory of that scene of my father’s violence rose so tragically in my mind that it seemed to impress me much more when I invoked it than at the time when I endured the pain. Then, too, my father’s strange, insane

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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idea of marrying me to a workman never left my mind.

I had sometimes dreamed of a cottage or a farm, with a gentleman for a husband, but never of a "lodging," with a weaver's loom or a carpenter's block in the centre of the room, waiting for "my man" to return from taking his work home, having "finished his day."

I could have no doubts about my deep and growing love for the people—a love which in my days of enthusiasm seemed capable of enabling me to sacrifice my very life for their cause; I wished to help them and to serve them, but to form a part of them,—I, whom generations of ancestors had elevated above them—that I could never do.

I recalled Saint-Just's words, which his sister often repeated to me in speaking of the elegance of the young Jacobite, "the people's friend." He said:

"I wish to raise the people up to me, and desire to see them one day dressed as I am myself, but I will never lower myself to them nor wear their blue blouse."

My father, on the contrary, delighted to wear the *sayon* of the Gauls, the peasant's blouse, and workman's smock-frock. He failed, however, to

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## “LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY”

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induce my mother to dress herself as a woman of the people.

To be sure, when I stayed with my aunts I gladly wore the peasant costume, which they had worn for years, but then they saw no one—they had retired from the world but had always remained gentlewomen. They had not chosen that mode of dress to become one of the lower class. Their ways, their conversation, their lives, showed the refinement of their caste. The contrast between their refinement and the peasant garb pleased them, because it was rustic and made them think of Trianon; whereas the contrast sought by my father would have made one think rather of the women who sat and knitted by the guillotine, the “tricoteuses” of the Revolution.

One day I had a discussion with my father on this subject, and told him I would much rather see the “white caps” (the name given in Picardy to the peasant women) wearing hats like mine—although at that time such a thing was not dreamed of, though doubtless they would have been pleased to don them—than I should care to wear their caps.

Notwithstanding reservations of this kind, or rather in spite of our different ways of interpreting the idea of equality, which I wished to be



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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elevating and not lowering, I agreed entirely with my father as to the forms of republican principles and as to the social and democratic programme which I had accepted. I neither laid aside nor disowned my little book, wherein were inscribed the twenty-one principles of the future.

My mother and grandmother both reproached my father for forcing my young mind and causing it to ripen too soon, to which he replied :

“ She can think what she pleases later. Either what I have taught her will satisfy her, as it satisfies me—and I think it will, for she resembles me more than any other member of the family—or she will throw off my ideas, as I threw off, in one night, the teachings of the seminary.”

The end of 1847 fixed in my mind the political convictions which I have kept, without modification, for more than thirty-five years. My father's great abilities, his immense goodness, his love of the people, his disinterestedness, all of which filled up the void in his conceptions, made me for many years his disciple.

He believed, and made others believe, that the people possessed, in a latent degree, all the virtues, and that it would be necessary only to put them in possession of all their social and political rights for them to be worthy of both.

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## “LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY”

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In my father's enthusiasm for “the masses” there was both the affirmation of a strong ideal and also a great deal of ingenuousness. I see it now, alas! Our sentimentality was not made of false sentiment, but of a valiant faith in the necessity of justice and in a proper proportion of social benefits. For us of the “middle class” to contribute to the happiness of the people involved a certain sacrifice which was not lacking in generosity or grandeur.

The belief in universal fraternity, the hope that each nation might participate in the freedom of other nations, developed the finest of all qualities—abnegation and heroism in the men who filled prominent rôles in 1848.

It could not be truthfully said, however, that practical, feasible ideas possessed the minds of the revolutionists of 1847, since a young girl, eleven and a half years old, as I was at that time, could be initiated into all the revolutionary plans, could understand them, be enthusiastic about them, and strive for their accomplishment. These plans were undoubtedly somewhat infantile.

Grandmother, to whom I had talked a great deal, was quite taken with the sentimentality of the idea of regeneration and with the honest appearance of character of the Liberals and the Repub-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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licans, at that time united. She began to think that the "hirelings of royalty" were corrupted, and that Louis Philippe was too unyielding to reform and to progress. Little by little she was being brought around to my father's way of thinking. Blondeau, although an office-holder, thought as I did.

Grandfather had received orders from his Bonapartist committee not to fear socialism, but, on the contrary, to encourage it, and he approved and supported my most eccentric ideas.

My father, to my great surprise, was not pleased with grandmother's half conversion. I had thought he would rejoice in it.

"If the middle class, who yesterday were still royalists, become republicans, why, then, when we do have a republic they will spoil the country and turn it royalist. We shall do much better to go slowly and to form new generations according to our principles than to rally elements which will create a selfish and middle-class republic instead of a democratic-socialist—otherwise, generous—republic. I see already," my father added, "all the harm that Odilon Barrot is doing."

He expressed ideas entirely opposite to those of my aunts, who accused Ledru-Rollin of misleading the campaign of the reformists, while he accused

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## **“LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY”**

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Odilon Barrot of turning this campaign aside from its end.

My father became every day more fanatical in his ideas. His opinions became more and more intolerant. Was this the reason of the violence of his character? Whenever he spoke, either to friends or to myself, of the future, he always spoke of the rising tide which it would soon be impossible to stem.

“Our principles clash, all things are as yet in conflict; we ourselves are powerless to be logical, and our country is bringing forth monstrous things,” said my father. “Everything is abnormal, because too many things are being elaborated at the same time. There is such a thirst for reform that when the first one is made others will follow which will overstep all we have ever imagined. That is the reason why King Louis Philippe, very sensibly, for the sake of his own security, will have none. As to myself,” added my father, “would an electoral reform satisfy me, would the combination of other intellects satisfy me, either? What do I desire? To undermine everything, according to my master, Proudhon, in his ‘Economic Contradictions,’ or to renew everything, according to my other master, Victor Considérant, as he teaches in his ‘Principles of Socialism: A

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Manifesto of Democracy in the Twentieth Century'? What I do desire with all my heart, and that which is absolutely necessary, and without which we shall lose our heads, and exact from the revolution reforms on which no thought has been bestowed, and which are neither ripened nor likely to live—what I do desire is to make somewhere, anywhere, an experiment of socialism, of association, and of life in common, a phalanstery. Then, indeed, the possibilities of a social change might be proved."





## XXXII

“VIVE LA RÉPUBLIQUE!”

**I** RETURNED to school, in spite of the pain it gave me. Happily for me, Maribert had not come back. By degrees I regained my influence. Stirring political events were following each other in quick succession, and drew the attention of my young friends whom I had interested in the importance of what was going on.

Even in the provinces public opinion was irritated by the obstinacy of King Louis Philippe and of Monsieur Guizot, and by the insufficiency of a servile House, whose majority was bought. Everyone said—and we also, the young female politicians of the Mesdemoiselles André's school, especially, declared—that “the hour for reforms had sounded!”

It was affirmed that King Louis Philippe pretended to fear nothing and to laugh at Odilon Barrot and Ledru-Rollin.

Much was said concerning a banquet about to take place in the First Arrondissement of Paris, and of seditious cries already heard. We called them “cries of deliverance.” When we

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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shook hands with one another every morning we murmured, in low tones: "Long live Reform! Down with Guizot!"

We knew, and kept saying among ourselves, that the people, the great people, "were stirring in their deep masses."

And, lo! one day we heard that many of these inoffensive people had been massacred for making a purely legal demonstration; that King Louis Philippe, after trying twice to form a ministry, and that the Duchess of Orléans, after a semblance of regency, were in flight; then we heard, in quick succession, that the people had erected barricades, that the National Guard had behaved like heroes, and that the Republic was proclaimed!

The Republic! and what a grand Republic! My father's and mine, one that began by recognizing the people and their right to work!

The Republic had just ratified this privilege, and the people's delegates had said, in words worthy of ancient Greece:

"The people have three months of misery to give to the service of the Republic."

"The people," said the *Democratique Pacifique*, "have behaved admirably and have shown themselves worthy of every liberty. They have proved their moral maturity. Not a single robbery, nor

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## “VIVE LA RÉPUBLIQUE!”

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a single attack on private property has been committed.” The ragged poor who guarded the Palace of the Tuileries had put placards along the corridors, reading: “Death to all thieves!” They had also protected the bank treasure.

France once again was at the head of nations, and gave a new example of her national grandeur.

My father arrived on the 26th of February. He could not stay quiet at Blérancourt, and felt that he must share his joy with me.

Grandmother did not appear over-anxious about the revolution.

Grandfather raged. He had thought that the overthrowing of the Orléans dynasty could be but to the sole advantage of Louis Napoleon. He fell upon the first triumphant Republican,—his son-in-law,—who came under his hands, and also upon his stupidly democratic Republic, and none of us could force him to beat a retreat. My father laughed, grandmother smiled, and I said:

“Ah! poor grandfather, with our Republic I am afraid your Bonaparte is in a bad way, however socialistic he may have pretended to be.”

I can remember that at the end of dinner on that 26th of February, grandfather, who, to console himself for his disappointment, had added a few



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bottles of his old Mâcon wine to his usual allowance, said to us, with eyes rounder than ever :

“ Well, I can see as clear as daylight into the future.”

“ Grandfather, it is eight o'clock in the evening.”

“ I see your Republic—do you hear, Lambert? do you hear, Juliette?—thrown to the ground by my Bonaparte. I repeat it, so that you may hear: revolutions always end in empires.”

Grandmother, Blondeau, and especially my father and I, laughed heartily at him.

At school, how excited and curious and frightened they all were! Half the pupils were missing and were shut up at home, as it was thought the revolution might spread in the provinces. The workmen of the glass manufactory were all for the Republic. They would doubtless proclaim it at Chauny, make a revolution on their own account, and perhaps commit pillage.

Mademoiselle André and her younger sister sent for me as soon as I arrived at school. They had long known of my father's opinions and guessed at mine. They wished to put themselves under our protection.

“ Well, Juliette, how pleased your father must be at the news, as he has always been a republican. Have you seen him? ”

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“Yes, Mademoiselle, he came yesterday, and he is overjoyed. He says that France is now, at last, worthy of her history; that she will govern herself; that all the European nations will admire us, and perhaps imitate us; that it is now the coming to power of the people, of the real people, not the corrupted middle class, and that——”

“That will do,” said the elder Mademoiselle André, sharply. “Please keep to yourself these beautiful opinions of your father. I forbid you to speak of them here.”

“In the class-room, Mademoiselle?”

“In the class-room or at recreation.”

I looked Mademoiselle André straight in the face. I was nearly as tall as she was. I answered:

“I cannot promise that, Mademoiselle, for we number a good many republicans in school. And no one can forbid us to speak of, and to love, the Republic.”

“But France has not accepted your Republic,” said Mademoiselle Sophie.

“She will accept it, Mademoiselle, for now the people can vote.”

The Mesdemoiselles André were torn by conflicting feelings—the imperative desire to hush me, which I perfectly understood from the tone in

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which Mademoiselle Sophie said: "Ah! Juliette, how sad it is to be divided between being obliged to be harsh to the daughter of a friend and the fear of irritating republican sentiments. When you next see your father, Juliette, you can tell him from us how sincerely we hope that his Republic will calm France instead of disturbing her."

I made my curtsy and went into the class-room. Curious glances followed me. I answered by signs that an important affair had happened. All my schoolmates were aware of my having been called into the drawing-room by "Mesdemoiselles."

I had a tri-coloured cockade pinned inside my bodice. I took it out and held it in the palm of my hand, under the half-raised cover of my desk. I showed it to my neighbour, and slipped it into her hand; she did the same to her neighbour. In an instant my cockade went the round of our long table, unperceived by our governess. My friends knew then that "Mesdemoiselles" had spoken to me about the Republic!

The class became highly excited; we were all restless and inattentive. Not one of us had learned her lessons or written her exercises, and there seemed to be but one answer:

"Mademoiselle, I have had no time for my lessons on account of the Republic."

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“Mademoiselle, I have had no time to study, on account of the Republic!”

“I wonder what interest the Republic can have for you?” said our governess, in a most disdainful tone, and shrugging her shoulders.

A voice was heard to answer, amid general silence. It was mine:

“Why, Mademoiselle, the Republic is most exciting to us!”

An approving murmur upheld me. Mademoiselle was silent, and looked amazed at me, and I saw it struck her that if I had dared to answer her as I had, it was because I thought I had the right to do so.

The exit of the class was something like a small riot.

It was our Republic, and we, the *Frondeuses*, owned it! The King in exile, republicans and democrats in power, it was simply a triumph! Surrounded and questioned, I did not know which of my friends to answer first.

“What did Mesdemoiselles say to you?” was the general query.

I told them what had passed, and, if it had been possible, they would have crowned me with laurels. “That was right! That is what I call brave and firm; that was just the thing to say; your true

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republican answer was what it should have been!" was the approving comment on my action.

I repeated for my friends' benefit every word my father had said: "The Republic was marvelous; we were to have complete liberty and no authority." Doubtless, and especially now, in the beginning of things, we were not to be impertinent to our governesses, but we should very soon be able to make them feel that, although younger and less clever than they, the Republic considered us their equals!

What discussions, what plans, what different ways of understanding Government there were! "I would do this! I would act thus!" we said. We each of us wanted so many different things, that it was agreed at last that we, the initiated, the *Frondeuses*, should each make out a programme, which should be read in recess next day, and that which seemed to us the best form of government should be decided upon by vote. Our young minds were filled with the current words of the day.

The uniting of "abilities" was decidedly quite insufficient as a reform; on that point everyone agreed; everybody must vote, men, women, and especially schoolgirls. We had conceived in our minds a foreshadowing of true universal suffrage,

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and later we were firmly convinced that we had invented it.

The opening of national workshops pleased my father greatly. He wrote to me that at last the people were to be happy; that one hundred thousand citizens were fed by the State and worked for it. He thought at that time, with many others, that Louis Blanc was secretly at the head of the founding and organizing of the national workshops, and his confidence in them grew thereby.

“All other nations admire us, and all will later imitate us,” added my father at the end of his long letter. “The Republic is to arm every Frenchman, so that all shall be prepared to join in delivering other nations.”

My father came to see us again in March. Alas! he seemed already very uneasy. The national assembly was full of reactionists. The Montagne had no authority. True, the establishing of the Republic had taken everyone by surprise. Nothing was ready; certain reforms had been pushed through, certain measures had been too hurried, but the feelings of all the republicans were so noble, so proud, so disinterested, there was such a belief among them in right, in justice, in the divine voice of the people, that it was better

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not to be disquieted with their indecision, nor to be too hard on mistakes already committed.

In my father's opinion, the worst of it was the fact that the whole world had its eyes upon us, and that the dream of a Republic and universal fraternity could be realised only by the Republic of France giving definitely, and at once, the example she owed to the world.

My father had just been elected Mayor of Blérancourt. His friends and disciples would never have allowed another to hold power there, however small that power might be, nor that he should not be able to possess the possibility of realising all that his enthusiasm and generosity promised for the Republic.

Grandmother and I went to Blérancourt to see them plant the tree of Liberty, but it displeased us to behold my father attending this ceremony dressed in a blue blouse. His tri-coloured scarf was tied so as to show the red only. Already my father declared: "Of the three colours, we like only the red." White seemed to him too Legitimist, and blue too Orléanist.

"Juliette," asked grandmother, in my ear, as we were starting for the ceremony, "do you like that blouse? does it not shock your taste?"

"It is partly blue, at any rate, grandmother,"

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I answered, laughing; “and, with papa’s ideas, it might have been all red!”

A young poplar tree was brought and planted in a large hole prepared for it in the market-place.

My father, since the Republic had been declared in the name of liberty, had become reconciled with the priest, who now blessed the tree of Liberty.

In his speech the priest declared that if the Republic realized the evangelical ideals of its programme, incarnated in the names of liberty, equality, and fraternity, it would be the finest form of government existing; but, in order to accomplish this, it was necessary that all republicans should be as sincere, as generous, and, he cleverly added, as Christian in heart, if not in form, and as devoted to the poor as the new Mayor.

In a speech full of ardour, which carried me away, and with a fiery eloquence which fascinated grandmother, my father answered the priest that no one could deny that the Republic, and its principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, was born from the Gospel; that Christ was the first of all socialists and republicans; that a true republican should possess all the Christian virtues, and that Christianity was the finest human formula ever conceived.

I was amazed. My father added: “All that has



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reference to the temporal power of the Church is admirable. It is more advanced than we socialists in the understanding and the practice of association. We have a great deal to learn from her, but it is time that she herself should learn from us the worship of nature, and allow herself to be penetrated by the truth of science!"

"My dear Mayor," said the vicar to my father after the ceremony, "you would accept the Christian religion with your eyes shut under the condition that it should be heathenish."

"In return," said my father, laughingly, to the vicar, "accept my heathen religion, springing from the love of nature, under the condition that it inspires Christian virtues."

"Never! never!" replied the vicar, smiling. "You have said that we are in advance of you in the conception of association and of life in common; we are also in advance of you from a religious point of view. Christianity represents the present and the future!" And he added, mockingly: "Paganism will continue to be more and more a thing of the past."

"So be it!" the Mayor replied, gaily, leading off the vicar, who came to breakfast with us.

"I believe," said my father, in the manner of one proposing a toast, at the end of the repast,

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“in an absolute, undeniable way, that the Republic is the consecration of liberty, of conscience, and of tolerance, and I, as Mayor, will prove to you, reverend vicar, with what largeness, what elevation of ideas, with what grandeur we democratic-socialist republicans understand liberty!”





### XXXIII

#### “OTHER TIMES, OTHER MANNERS”

**M**Y progress as a student suffered considerably from my serious political preoccupation.

My father came to see us every week, most anxious to keep me well advised of all passing events. He gave me cuttings, selected and cleverly classified, from the *Democratique Pacifique*, and brought me books, pamphlets, and proclamations. One would have thought that it was very necessary that I should be instructed about the acts of the members of the Provisionary Government and with the writings of those who showed themselves the most ardent among the reformers. The study of the French language, of history, geography, and literature, were secondary things to the author of my being.

Besides, in truth, who knew whether the French tongue might not become universal; whether the history of kings would be able to keep its footing amid the events of the great revolutionary outburst; whether the geography of our planet was not going to be changed in such a way by the fraternity of peoples that it would be almost useless

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to learn it under the form given to it by the odious past?

The future meant progress, light, new things! All the old forms were to be banished. But, by a strange contradiction, which, however, seemed to strike no one, this progress, this light, these new things continued to be based on the evangelical principles of liberty, equality, and on the morality of Christ, “the Precursor,” the first Socialist.

In the jargon of the epoch, the Republic of Pericles, of Socrates, of Plato, mingled its history with that of the great French Revolution. The beauty of Athenian art alternated with the porridge of Sparta; the naked feet, or the *sabots*, of the soldiers of the fourteen armies with the magnificence of the festivals of the Goddess of Reason.

There was no escaping the qualifications given to all men and to all things—what we call “saws” to-day. The integrity of Saint-Just’s character, Robespierre’s austerity, Danton’s power, Ledru-Rollin’s love of the people, Proudhon’s overwhelming courage, the sublime social theories of Pierre Leroux, of Cabet, of Louis Blanc, woman’s superiority as shown by Tousseul in his *Esprit des Bêtes*, and by Fourier in his *Phalanstère*, and by George Sand—all this kind of talk studded the speeches of orators in small towns and villages to

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such a degree that many orations were almost identical, no matter what subject was treated. To improvise was easy; the speakers simply wove phrases together, and the sonority of the words lulled their listeners as a well-known air will do.

The oratorical art of the Republic of 1848 in the provinces was analogous to the music of the hand-organs which delighted the whole land at that time.

When grandmother or grandfather begged my father to lay aside his fine phraseology and do them the honour of initiating them into the details of such of his governmental conceptions as could possibly be realised, he answered:

“Anything is better than what existed before! we are about to take a plunge into the unknown; no matter what happens, we shall at least come out of the ruts in which the chariot of State has stuck in the mud for centuries. The French Revolution made a grand effort to urge the horses of the chariot to gallop, but Bonaparte bestrode them and drove them back. It is for us to drive them forward again.”

In spite of his increasing reservation of opinion on certain men whom he began to suspect of being lukewarm, my father's optimism was as sincere as my own. Illusions, the love of the unforeseen, of

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the romantic, the absolute ignorance of the possibility of the realisation of an idea, the most infantile simplicity held sway in my father's mind as it possessed the minds of the greater number of the men of 1848 whom I have known; but what a passion of devotedness moved them, what thirst for sacrifices to be made for the holy cause of the people, what generosity, what loyal abandonment of the privileges of their caste, what sincere fraternity, what conviction that “the humble class” was ripe for equality, what indignation against the appetite for enjoyment, against egotism, against Guizot's celebrated formula, “Grow rich!”

The men of 1848 were apostles and saints. At no other epoch has there been more honesty, more virtue, more noble simplicity. They were not political men, they were souls in love with the ideal. They were all as sincere as my father; all have a right to absolute respect, and no one could have lived beside them without honouring and cherishing their memory.

They were old-fashioned, if you like. All parties become old-fashioned in time, but how few men, before and since 1848, have possessed their youthful hearts, their high inspirations, their love of devotedness and of sacrifice!

My memory preserves their noble faces crowned

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with laurels, while the lucky, the rich, opportunists, men of business and of politics, whose aim was personal gain, those who, victorious, said to one another: "It is our turn to enjoy!" who repeated among themselves: "The most important attribute of power is the spoils"—such men are as vile in my mind as is the vileness of their disciples.

Not one among the republicans of 1848 thought of obtaining a better position from his passage to power, not one grew richer. If they did not accomplish what they dreamed for the people, it was not because they threw their principles overboard when they obtained possession of the great city of Paris; it was because their conception of social and human happiness was too beautiful to be realised, and because the people, first of all, refused to make a trial of their theories.

Later, I knew the greater part of these "imbeciles," as Ernest Picard called them. They resembled my father. Their doubts—and they had many!—were of too recent date to have dried up their souls; they no longer believed in a divine Christ; they still believed in a human one. They worshipped that mysterious Science which replaced for them the supernatural, and which had not then brought all its brutality to light in crushing man under machinery.

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They were internationalists, not foregoing by so being their legitimate pride of race, not accepting without resistance being conquered by an enemy, not admitting or imitating the utilitarian ideas of national groupings morally inferior to themselves, but in order to infuse into other nations their principles of love and of regeneration.

My father said to me, towards the end of April, that he saw the distance grow wider every day between his hopes and the actual events taking place.

“I am afraid,” he added, “that our Republic will be only a rose-water Republic, of the kind which some day will be dyed with blood. The ‘yellow gloves’ of the *National* are the masters, and are delivering the Republic over to ambitious men.”

My grandmother, on the contrary, declared herself quite satisfied with the Republic, which she found in no wise frightful, as she had feared it would be.

“Jean-Louis, I am getting on very well with your Republic!” she would say to my father.

At first my father answered: “Wait a little, mother;” later he replied: “You are more satisfied than I am.” One day he burst forth: “By Heaven! if the Republic suits you, it is because it is made for your benefit! The Orléanists might as



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well return; they will have nothing to change in favour of the middle class."

My father became soon, in the most bitter sense of the word, a malcontent. Of course I became a malcontent also.





## XXXIV

### I GO TO BOARDING-SCHOOL

**I** WAS a very aggressive malcontent moreover. My discussions with grandmother became so violent that grandfather several times was angry with me, and even Blondeau blamed me. My friend Charles, who would probably have upheld me—for he was a revolutionist, as well as my father and myself—had left Chauny to become the secretary of one of his boyhood friends, a high functionary of the Republic, at Paris.

My father soon became greatly excited. "They are lying to us, they are deceiving us, they are trying to put us to sleep," he said, much grieved, feeling his Christian-heathen-socialist-scientific Republic escaping him.

My grandmother felt more and more secure. "Order is maintained, and therefore the form of government matters little, after all," she said. Grandfather, when my father and I became more hopeless, said:

"Come, come, things are going very well for the Empire."

But I made my grandparents very unhappy with

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my sorrow, my recriminations, my imprecations. Life became insupportable, intolerable, to all of us. It must have been the same, at that time, in every family where there were idealists and sincere Republicans, those who believed they could bring down the moon for the people, worthy, as they thought them, of all miraculous gifts.

The national workshops, which had interested me so much, now made me despair. Alas! they were going wrong. What! that admirable conception—the State creating workshops to give employment to those who needed it, to feed those who were dying of hunger; that benevolent, protecting institution, a social safeguard against poverty, an admirable example held up to all nations—was it to be dissolved?

Émile Thomas, who was at the head of these workshops, did not follow Louis Blanc's ideas, although he often said to the contrary. They were beginning to suspect him of being the agent of "the man of the Strasbourg and Boulogne riots." Instead of organising the national workshops, he disorganised them.

"The reactionists," said my father to me, "endeavour to make it believed that Émile Thomas is acting according to Louis Blanc's ideas, when, on the contrary, he is the worst enemy of those ideas."

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They wish to render pure socialism guilty of the crimes they are committing in its name. Trélat, the Minister of Public Instruction, cannot suffer the national workshops; the Executive Committee abhors them, the middle class has a horror of them, because it is afraid of them. What will happen if, as the National Assembly, composed of reactionists, desires, they abolish the workshops? A hundred thousand men thrown suddenly out of work, on the streets of Paris, will cause terrible riots; there will be a bloody revolution, in which reforms will be drowned, and that is their aim."

Ah! those hundred thousand men threatened with being turned into the streets! I saw them unhappy, wandering about, without work, despairing, while their wives and children were dying of hunger at home. I wept over them. My heart was full of an immense pity for them, and, day by day, I felt obliged to be kept informed of all that was taking place. My grandmother, who had recently subscribed to the *National*, wished to prevent my reading it, but I insisted on seeing it, and, while I was revolted at the hatred of the "yellow gloves" for *my* national workshops, I kept myself informed about events until my father's visits.

When I learned that Monsieur de Falloux was commissioned by the National Assembly to furnish

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a plan of dissolution of the national workshops, I knew that everything was falling to pieces.

My father said to me: "They are organising butchery; they wish to dissolve the national workshops from one day to another. Trélat himself sees the danger. He proposes to replace the workmen successively, little by little. He has destituted Émile Thomas, seeing at last the disorganising work he was accomplishing; he has given his son-in-law, Lalanne, the place, and Lalanne is reorganising the workmen, but it is too late, for the wolves of the National Assembly wish carnage."

This nearly killed me. The people, the good people, so patient, so generous, who had behaved so admirably in the fateful days of February, were being urged to yield to the evil instincts of plunder from the poverty imposed upon them.

I was so unhappy at all I felt, and my suffering came so much into contradiction with my grandparents' and Blondeau's excessive hardness of heart, who said: "Let them finish at once with the beggars!" that I begged grandmother to allow me to return to Blérancourt with my father on his next visit.

"You can do as you please," she said. "But I warn you, my poor Juliette, that in your present state of aberration of mind, the little good sense

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remaining to you will be imperilled if you live with your father. He will destroy it, and your marriage with a workman will be an appropriate ending to your follies. Now, I must confide to you that young X. has already expressed great admiration for you. He is seventeen years old, and his father, half seriously, half laughingly, on account of your youth, has made overtures to me regarding a possible alliance, a few years hence, between our two families. Certainly, this is not what I had hoped for you, for I should like you to be married in Paris, where I would go and live part of the year with you, in order to direct your steps in the path of that destiny which, until lately, I had foreseen for you. But you have such insane notions that perhaps a good middle-class marriage in the country would be better for you than all I had desired for my only grandchild. Here is what I propose: Will you go to school as a boarder? The school is so near that I shall feel you still with me. You can lecture your schoolmates as much as you please, and then your grandfather and I and Blondeau, having to bear with you only once a week, will be better able to endure your outbursts of passion. But if we must see you weep or be angry, either suffering or in a rage every day because this good Republic does not suit you, why,

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then, my darling grandchild, the situation will be untenable."

I realised then, from this proposition, the amount of annoyance I had caused my grandparents. Could it be possible that grandmother, who until lately had found the hours I spent at school too long, and our separation, while I was at Chivres or Blérancourt, unbearable—could she wish that I should go to boarding-school? I was stunned; however, my foolish pride prevented me from throwing myself on grandmother's neck and asking pardon for my folly, for I realised at that moment how absurd I had been; and then, what she had told me of X., a handsome young man, whom I found charming and witty, raised me in my own estimation so much that I thought a young person like myself, nearly twelve years old, could not ask pardon like a little girl, so I replied, although with an aching heart:

"Very well, grandmother, it is agreed; I will go to boarding-school as soon as you wish."

"To-morrow," she replied.

I nearly burst into tears, but it was class-hour, and I left for school, saying to myself it would be the last day that I would have my own room all to myself, where, from morning until night, I was surrounded by evidences of my grandmother's pas-

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sionate tenderness and my grandfather's gay affection. I could see only from afar my pigeons fly down, cooing and pecking in the courtyard. I should miss the friendship of Blondeau, to whom I could no longer confide my sorrows, or experiment upon with my father's startling theories, which I had fully adopted, but which he accepted only with certain modifications.

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The next day I went as a boarder to the Mlles. André's school. My grandfather accompanied me there, and it needed all my courage, when I bade him good-bye, not to beg him to allow me to return home at night. I breakfasted and dined with my schoolmates. At class, at recreations, and all the day long, I saw no one but them. The absolute silence at table was a veritable torture. When I had gone to bed, I was so unhappy and wept so much that I could not sleep, and this was the first sleepless night I had ever passed in my life. I was frightened to think of the next night, for this had seemed to me as terrible as the infernal regions, and I imagined I could never sleep again; this caused me great anxiety, but of course I did not confide it to any of my friends, the most intimate of whom were boarders like myself.

One of my political enemies who knew me well,



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said to herself that some disaster, some great quarrel between my grandmother and myself, could alone have caused our separation, and she amused herself maliciously by passing to and fro before me, sneering, as she spread about a fantastic story concerning my coming as a boarder. My red eyes, my discomposed face, gave credence to her tale, which was circulated about during the mid-day recreation. They said that my grandmother loved me no longer, that she did not wish to see me any more, that I had done all manner of disobedient things; and, of course, I was at once informed of all this gossip.

At the afternoon recreation several of my schoolmates suddenly ran to me and said:

“Your grandmother is on the top of the wall in the back courtyard. She wishes you to go and say good-night to her.”

Being aware of the stories spread about me by my political enemy, I went to the foot of the wall, which I would not otherwise have done, most certainly, for I was so angry with grandmother that I did not wish to answer her summons.

“How are you, my grandchild?” she asked, perched on the top of a ladder, her head alone appearing above the wall. “Have you slept well?”

“No, grandmother, I have not slept at all, and

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most surely I shall never sleep again. But what does that matter to you? You are happy, you sleep well; that is all that is necessary. Say good-night to grandfather and to Blondeau for me. Good-night, grandmother, but let me warn you that, if you call for me again to-morrow from the top of that horrid wall, I won't come!" and I ran away.

The following days I worked only by fits and starts, when my pride was at stake, or when I wished to surpass a political adversary. Being the head of my party, I could not allow myself to be conquered.

My heart was saddened by the sorrow of living no longer under my beloved grandmother's wing, and I continued to feel grievous distress of mind in connection with my fears concerning the workmen of the national workshops.

To understand rightly the sum of love contained in the words, "The poor people," or to comprehend to what a degree those who were sincere socialist-republicans believed themselves its friends, one must go back to quite another epoch.

We socialist-republicans had no longer the courage to play at recreations. The National Assembly was treating our workmen of the memorable February days, those who had written on the walls

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of the Tuileries, "Death to thieves!" as if they were bandits and plunderers!

How we suffered with the poor people! It was all over with them. We knew it was only a question of days and hours before one hundred thousand men would be given over to hunger and want. Not one of my schoolmates had allowed herself for a long time to spend one cent on delicacies or sweets. We counted up our resources constantly. By combining them we should be able to feed one man of the national workshops, but no more. I decided that we would write a touching letter to the Minister Trélat, whom we detested, who, according to our thinking, was the cause of all the trouble, proposing to him that we should take charge of one workman of the national workshops. Certainly, one was not much out of a hundred thousand, but if in every boarding-school they would do as much, there would be, at all hazards, a certain number saved.

The planning of this letter was most difficult, and took a great deal of time. Each separate group, having made out its draught, communicated it to the other groups. We numbered eleven groups, secretly bound together, each one of which had its partisans, and all our partisans wished to share in the drawing up of the letter. At last the

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final result, compiled from all the other draughts, received the approbation of the united groups, and the important letter was despatched. I addressed it to my friend Charles, in Paris, for him to take and deliver it from us to the Minister in person.

At that same moment the National Assembly cruelly decided that the workmen from seventeen to twenty-five years of age should be incorporated in different regiments, and also to send to the department of Sologne—a country desolated by fever, and whose climate was deadly—a certain number of workmen of the national workshops; and that the remainder should be distributed in the provinces, to build roads and do other work, which should be planned by the municipalities.

Thinking that our “national workman” would be sent to us some day, not only did we stop eating cakes, and economise in every possible way, but we begged and collected everything we could from our relatives under all sorts of pretexts. One girl had obtained a suit of clothes from one of her brothers, and had cleaned and mended it with care. No one was to be allowed even to suspect our plot, for we knew that we should be excommunicated by all our families if they should imagine that we were thinking of protecting one of the “monsters” of the national workshops.

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So we had specified in our letter to Minister Trélat that our national workman was to present himself at the boarding-school of the Mlles. André of Chauny as a pensioner of Juliette Lambert!

My father had written to me that things were worse than had been reported; that the authorities occupied themselves no longer to find any sort of place for the workmen; that the National Assembly was odious, criminal; that it wished to dissolve the national workshops immediately, without caring what became of the hundred thousand men turned adrift. "There will be great misfortunes," he added.

I went for a vacation the next day, a Sunday, to grandmother's; and Blondeau talked politics before me without my saying a word, for I had determined, since my entrance at the boarding-school, not to speak of anything but commonplaces when I went to visit my grandparents.

Blondeau related what seemed incredible—that Trélat, the Minister of Public Instruction, had asked that some pity should be shown to the bandits of the national workshops, and had begged the National Assembly, with trembling voice, not to throw a hundred thousand men on the streets, and to allow him to discover some way of finding places for them; that he had proposed incorporation, sending

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## I GO TO BOARDING-SCHOOL

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them to the department of Sologne, road-building, and other work to be decided upon by the municipalities.

"Your news is a week old, Blondeau," I could not help saying to him. "And you can add that the National Assembly laughed at Trélat's tardy outbursts of feeling, and that it decided . . ."

I related the decision, and there was silence.

My grandfather, provoked, and scarcely able to control his anger, asked me:

"Are you for the insurgents?"

"I am, grandfather, for the hundred thousand wretched men, to whom, perhaps imprudently, they promised to give work, and whom, suddenly, without pity, they wish to deprive of it."

"But they are assassins!"

"Whom have they assassinated?"

"They are thieves!"

"From whom have they stolen?"

"They terrify the country."

"Oh! yes, they make them out bugbears. They say they are madmen, in order to kill them; perhaps, finally, they will, indeed, make them terrifying, grandfather."

Blondeau and grandmother looked at each other bewildered. Neither the one nor the other breathed a word.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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“It is time that Prince Louis should occupy himself with it,” replied grandfather, “or else such ideas as yours, Juliette, will drive us all crazy.”

“Alas! your Prince Louis occupies himself too much with it. It is he, through Émile Thomas, who has made the national workshops fail.”

“Prince Louis could never occupy himself too much with the affairs of France, do you hear, little insurgent? He must save us by a good Empire, securely founded, and which must last, at least, until my death.”





## 'XXXV

### DARK DAYS FOR THE REPUBLIC

**O**NE of our schoolmates brought us the next day a clipping from a newspaper containing an article applauding the measures taken by the Government after the following facts had occurred.

Under the threat, voted by the National Assembly, of an immediate disbanding, the workmen had sent delegates to the Luxembourg, who had begged Monsieur Marie, a man high in the Government, to delay the Assembly's decision.

Monsieur Marie had answered, so said the newspaper, "as a Cæsar might have done":

"If the workmen will not leave, we will make them do so by force; do you understand?"

That night armed bands had gone through the streets of Paris, singing: "*On n'part pas! on n'part pas!*" to the tune of the *Lampions*. Groups of workmen had been heard to say: "We have been betrayed, and we must begin the revolution of February over again." Other groups had cried out: "We must have Napoleon!" and they had been the most clamorous of all. The



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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workmen were indignant with de Lamartine, Garnier-Pagès and Arago, who had failed in all their promises.

The poor people were in revolt. There was danger of a massacre. The anger of the wretched had burst forth.

It seemed to us that petitions might prevent all this. Was it possible to understand, we said, that the members of the Government, or others, had not placed themselves at the head of a manifestation for conciliation? How could it be that they had driven a hundred thousand men, all bearing the arms of the National Guards, to desperation? Did they wish to bring about the end of the Republic?

We thought of nothing but these terrible things. At the least allusion to similar events in our lessons of history, we exchanged sorrowful notes with one another during class hours.

What was taking place? What was going to happen?

I received a letter from my friend Charles, addressed to Blondeau, commissioning him to give it to me. I should not have received it until a week later, when I was to leave school for my day at home, if Blondeau had not come at the mid-day recreation and asked to see me in the parlour. He said to me:

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## DARK DAYS FOR THE REPUBLIC

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"Here is a letter from Charles, and I come to tell you at the same time that since the day before yesterday, the 23d of June, the insurrection has broken out in Paris; that they are killing one another by thousands, and that blood is flowing like water. Are you contented, dreadful little revolutionist?"

"Blondeau!" I said, crying, "that was what I feared. They have exasperated those poor, wretched men beyond endurance at last."

"Now you are beginning again! But open your letter from Charles. You see I have not unsealed it; Charles has told me, doubtless, the same thing that he has written to you."

This was what I read:

"At last, my dear Juliette, the Government has seen that it must defend society energetically against the miserable creatures in whom you are interested. All the partisans of order, from the Monarchical party of the Rue de Poitiers to my friend and patron, Flocon, have united to crush those who have been brought over here and hired by foreigners.

"I kiss you good-bye, Juliette, until we meet again. Your friend, Charles."

I held out the dreadful missive to Blondeau.

"He is perfectly right. He says what is true!"

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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exclaimed Blondeau, giving the letter back to me after having read it.

I left him without even saying good-bye, and ran to my schoolmates and partisans, who were gathered together, and anxious about the visit I had received.

"The revolution has broken out again," I said, and I read to them my ex-friend Charles's letter. I emphasised the *ex*, for I had already torn him from my heart.

I was in such a state of excitement that I felt as if I were intoxicated. My faithful friends, after a half-hour of unanimous expressions of indignation, thought as I did.

"I am of the opinion," I said to them, "that we should do something. We cannot remain inert while they are massacring innocent people in Paris. I have hidden at the bottom of a little bag, in my linen-closet, a large handkerchief which my father gave me, in the centre of which is printed: 'Long live the Democratic and Socialistic Republic!' Find me a long stick in the wood-house, a ribbon or a string, and we will arrange a flag out of it, and will make a manifestation. Will you follow me?"

"We will!" they cried.

"If we could add a few recruits, some partisans, to our united groups, so that our manifestation

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## DARK DAYS FOR THE REPUBLIC

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would be more imposing, don't you think it would be better?"

"We will all try to get some," said my comrades.

We then dispersed. I soon returned with my large blue, white, and red handkerchief, and I fastened it to a long stick in such a manner that the words, "Long live the Democratic and Socialist Republic" should be plainly visible.

With my heart ready for battle, I placed myself at the head of my battalion, crying: "Long live the Democratic-Socialist Republic! Long live the insurgents! '*On n'part pas! on n'part pas!*'"

A certain number of my schoolmates followed us; the others looked at us, terrified. The Mles. André came running, and snatched my handkerchief-flag out of my hands. I defended it heroically. Several of my schoolmates supported me. But a troop commanded by my political enemy came up, crying: "Down with the Democratic-Socialist Republic!" and, lending aid to the Mles. André and the under-governess, got the better of us. I received some well-directed blows, and I suffered at once from physical pain and from the humiliation of defeat. I was dragged to the drawing-room, held by both arms, and much jostled about. My valiant comrades followed me.

The Mles. André sat down in their two largest

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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arm-chairs to give me trial. Mlle. Sophie, the younger, questioned my partisans and allies.

"It was Juliette Lambert, was it not, who incited you to this act of scandalous folly?" she asked them.

Alas! out of twenty-two, seventeen answered:

"Yes, mademoiselle."

The five others clung close to one another. Mlle. Sophie could drag nothing from them but one and the same answer:

"Both she and ourselves wished to make a manifestation!"

"Oh! yes, you are brave and faithful friends," Mlle. Sophie replied, who did not really wish to punish anyone but me. "It is a noble sentiment, for which I give you praise. Was it one of you—now, don't lie—who furnished the handkerchief?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"You see, the premeditation came alone from Juliette Lambert."

I had not said a word, nor made a gesture, wishing to keep up my dignity, though accused, and to force my judges, my faithful friends, and even the traitors, to admire me.

"Do you deny what you have done?" Mlle. Sophie asked me.

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## DARK DAYS FOR THE REPUBLIC

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"No, mademoiselle, I am an insurgent, but—"

At this moment the mother of one of my faithful friends entered, exclaiming:

"My daughter—I wish my daughter—where is she? The insurgents are marching on Chauny!"

There was a general panic. They allowed my friend and her mother to depart, and they barricaded the front door.

"Don't be frightened!" I cried, going from one to another of my schoolmates, making no discrimination between friends and enemies, "I will protect you. They are my friends, and we will go and mount guard."

We picked up our unfortunate and much damaged flag, and my corporal, my four "insurgents" and I, went and placed ourselves by the barricaded front door. We heard a battalion of the National Guard passing by, crying: "Down with the insurgents! Death to them!"

Frightened people in the streets talked together, saying:

"The Guards have gone to bar the way to the insurgents."

The Mlles. André closed all the doors and shutters of the house, and they left us where we were

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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from half-past one o'clock in the afternoon until nightfall. One of us tried to open a door at dinner-time. It was impossible, and we were obliged to remain there very hungry.

We were boarders, all five of us, and could not think of returning to our families. Besides, the padlocked door and the high walls prevented any hope of flight. We said to one another:

“After all, those who are fighting suffer much more than we. They also are hungry; they are wounded, they are dying for their cause, and what are our sufferings compared with theirs?”

Finally, after what seemed interminable hours, they came to fetch us, and sent us to bed without supper. We were too proud to ask for any; but the traitors had kept a little of their bread for us, and, with some chocolate they gave us, by slipping it under our sheets, we were able to satisfy our hunger a little, which sleep finally pacified.

The next day, in the morning, I was again called to the drawing-room, but this time alone. My faithful friends, cleverly influenced, had agreed to beg pardon, and had made their submission.

The elder Mlle. André asked me whether I repented.

I tried to prove to her that I had not acted like a child; that I was convinced of my right to have

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## DARK DAYS FOR THE REPUBLIC

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my own opinions, and that I had defended ideas about which I had seriously reflected.

"Disturbing, dangerous, and wicked ideas!" replied the elder Mlle. André.

"They are ideas of conciliation, of peace, and of justice, mademoiselle, but they are not understood by those who find present things excellent, or by those who are afraid of all reform."

"This is my sentence," said Mlle. André, curtly. "You will take breakfast in the refectory, and I shall announce at the end of the meal that I am going to send you home to your parents. Such scandals cannot end without an example being made."

I breakfasted with good appetite, and when I heard the sentence delivered I was neither ashamed nor remorseful. My only fear was that I might be severely blamed by my grandmother.

I said to myself that in any case I would have recourse to my father, who could but uphold me for having defended our common cause, and for having suffered for our opinions.

I rose proudly and replied, at least with apparent calmness, for in reality my heart was almost strangling me, so fast did it beat:

"I am delighted to leave; I stifle under oppression, and I am going to be free at last!"



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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I said good-bye to no one. I went and put on my hat and waited for Mlle. Sophie, who was to take me back to grandmother.

My friends considered me an heroic victim to my cause, but were not sorry, so one of them told me later, to be relieved from the excitement I caused them.

My grandmother was at first disturbed on hearing the story of my escapade; but, seeing my resolute attitude, she thought more of winning me back than of scolding me, for, during her last days of fright, fearing the insurgents would come, she was all the more unhappy at not having me with her in the danger threatening the town. She had thought continually of sending for me. Since I had returned, why should she be angry? So, with quickly recovered calmness, she replied to Mlle. Sophie:

“As you consider Juliette’s action an act of insubordination toward you, you are quite right to bring her back to me. But, permit me to tell you that I think her conduct unusual. It shows me Juliette as I love to see her—giving proof of a strong will and a courage that everyone does not possess. Although the child returns to me without my having sent for her, neither she nor I will suffer from it, and, mademoiselle, I have a greater desire

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## DARK DAYS FOR THE REPUBLIC

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to thank you for having brought her back to me than to ask pardon for her."

I threw myself into grandmother's arms, and all trace of ill-feeling between us disappeared.

Panic was on the increase during the following days. They said that the insurgents, driven out of Paris, were coming to sack the town; the National Guard went to bar the way against the plunderers. Grandmother, in spite of my reassuring words, was terrified. She hid at night, in a large hole which grandfather dug in our courtyard, her silver, her jewels, all the valuable things she possessed. Blondeau also buried his money-box in the hole, which they covered with earth and gravel.

My father, to whom grandmother had written, sent me a letter of congratulation at having left a school where they taught nothing but inane middle-class ideas.





## XXXVI

### ANOTHER VISIT AT CHIVRES

**I** THEN had a long vacation, which began the 1st of July and did not finish until the 1st of October.

I remained three months with my aunts at Chivres, to their great delight.

I took intense pleasure in the study of Latin, and made real progress in the reading and translating of the "bucolics."

My aunts, however, sermonised me severely on the reason for my having been sent away from school. The *National* had inspired them with a holy horror of the plunderers, of those who had been "bought up by the foreigner," and the twelve thousand men who had been killed in the June riots. The twenty thousand prisoners and exiles did not soften their hearts for a moment. My harangues interested them as ill-sustained paradoxes, but did not convince them in any way.

The citizen Louis Blanc, with his project of a conciliatory proclamation; the citizen Caussidière, with his extraordinary motion to have the Deputies go into the streets, to send them to the barricades and to the insurgents with a flag of truce, had exasperated them. They were merciless. The

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## ANOTHER VISIT AT CHIVRES

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stories of the cruelties of the National Guards in the provinces, and of the Mobile Guard firing on the insurgent prisoners through the vent-holes of cellars, did not revolt them. It was necessary to kill as many as possible of those "mad dogs," they said. And it was gentle Frenchwomen, faithful Liberals—or believing themselves such—who spoke thus! Marguerite knew nothing of the truth concerning it. To her the insurgents were savages, devils, etc.; and I could not make any feeling of clemency, any pity, enter into the minds or hearts of Marguerite or my aunts. They had all been too frightened.

While my father was alarmed, and cried out against the abomination of seeing men who for long years had defended liberty, who had called themselves its soldiers, condemn and persecute the people to whom they had made public and solemn promises to act for their good, and who had only asked them to keep those promises within the measure of possibility, my aunts spoke of Pascal Duprat, a Democratic-Republican, as a sublime man, who, while pretending to wish to save the Republic, had been the first man to demand a Dictatorship.

The death of General Bréa, killed by two acknowledged Bonapartists, Luc and Lhar; that of Archbishop Affre, due to an accident and not to

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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an assassination, were, to my aunts, premeditated crimes, whose expiation demanded the death of thousands of men belonging to "the most ignoble and abject populace."

My aunt Constance still trembled as she told me of her emotion when she had read the words of the President of the Chambers, mounting the tribune to say: "All is finished!"

It would have been folly to endeavour to convert my aunts to a more enlightened feeling of humanity. I gave up trying to do it. I read the *National* in secret, Marguerite giving it to me after my aunts and great-grandmother had read it in turn, and I suffered every day with renewed sorrow at the violence of the reaction, the sentences of the Council of War, at the persecutions, the denunciations, the state of the public mind, which my father wrote to me had become so Cæsarian that it would throw us into the arms of Napoleon, who had been too delicately brought up by England to subdue us.

The night session, when the prosecution of Louis Blanc and Caussidière was voted, delighted my aunts. They would not even read Louis Blanc's justification, much changed though it was in the *National*, for I compared it later with the text of the *Démocratie Pacifique*, which my father sent to

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## ANOTHER VISIT AT CHIVRES

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me. In my aunts' opinion, and in that of all the middle class, Louis Blanc was "the founder, the responsible author of the monstrous national workshops."

Now, Louis Blanc proved in court, what his partisans had known for a long time, that the national workshops had been established not only without his participation, but against his will, and that he had not visited them even once.

The obstinacy of holding to a preconceived opinion against absolute proof, admitting no discussion, seemed to me at that time the most extraordinary thing in the world. I endeavoured several times to read Louis Blanc's protestation to my aunts; they would not listen to it, not wishing to hear it, or to be convinced by it, and they continued to call him the "sinister man of the national workshops."

I confess that this obstinacy irritated me, and that my affection for my dear aunt's suffered from it.

Louis Napoleon was elected in five departments at the supplementary elections. The terms he used in thanking his electors, for different reasons, provoked both my father and my grandmother, and my aunts as well, whose disgust for "Badinguet" increased daily.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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“The Democratic-Republic shall be ‘my religion,’” said Louis Napoleon, “and I will be its priest.”

My grandfather would certainly have made a wry face at this speech, had he not always had the habit of saying, concerning all the manifestations of him whom he called his “beloved Pretender”:

“He is admirable, in the way he scoffs at the republican birds.”

They talked of nothing but “Badinguet” at my aunts’ all through September and October—of his oath of gratitude and devotion to the National Assembly, of the repeal of the law of 1832, which gave the Bonapartes liberty to live in France. I heard my aunts continually discussing the good faith of pretenders.

“Certain republicans are absurdly simple when they believe that an oath cannot be violated,” said aunt Sophie. “One must know one’s Roman history very little not to see that ‘Badinguet’ is playing the eternal game of the Cæsars.”

“When once they have voted to have a President of the Republic, and have chosen ‘a man of the Brumaire,’ when men of moderate opinions uphold this proceeding, what can possibly enlighten them? How can de Lamartine uphold such aberration of mind with his authority? Unless he de-

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## ANOTHER VISIT AT CHIVRES

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ceives himself to the extent of thinking he will be named President of the Republic, his conduct is inexplicable," said aunt Constance.

Politics still interested me a little in conversation, but when I did not talk of them, I thought no more about them.

"Men are worth nothing, nothing at all," said aunt Anastasie one day; "I do not know a single man who has a just mind."

"You know so many!" replied aunt Constance, with her habitual scoffing. "I never knew you to have but three masculine friends: the miller, his mill-keeper, and Roussot!"

I worked happily with aunt Sophie, who found me very desirous to learn Latin, and less occupied with explaining or contradicting everything. I no longer sought for eccentricities in ideas or opinions. I studied methodically, realising how much time I had lost.

I felt for the first time in my life, perhaps, that I had only a very youthful mind; that I had for a long while really learned but little, but, like a parrot, had remembered a good deal. I condemned myself as pretentious, insupportable, and I resolved that I would begin to be quite a different person, desirous solely to learn, and to be very studious and proper.





## XXXVII

### I BEGIN TO STUDY HOUSEKEEPING

**W**HEN I returned to Chauny my grandmother, whom I found more affectionate, more lovable than ever, said to me:

“Now, my dear Juliette, you shall do what you choose; you shall learn only what pleases you, or nothing at all, if you prefer it; but I ask you to take an interest in housekeeping. You shall have entire charge of ours for six months. You shall order, you shall spend as if you were absolute mistress. I reserve for myself only the right of giving you advice. As you love order, to arrange things, and to ornament a house, it will be easy for you to do all this with taste. If you desire to have lessons in cooking, you have only to tell me. I should like you to realise how much an art embellishes life—that of music especially. The new organist is a remarkably good professor. I know you do not care for the piano, but I should like you to cultivate your voice, and I should be glad if you would try the violin; but, I repeat, you shall do just as you choose in everything.”

“I shall be delighted to keep house, grand-

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## I BEGIN TO STUDY HOUSEKEEPING

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mother, it will amuse me a great deal; and I will try the violin, it is original; I will cultivate my voice also, and, since you leave me absolutely free to do as I please with regard to my ordinary studies, that will give me time, grandmother, to reflect about the little I know of elementary things."

I reflected so seriously that, after a few days, I told grandmother that I would ask my father to draw me up a plan of study, so that while becoming the prospective mistress of a house—which idea fascinated me more and more—I could improve myself somewhat in spelling, arithmetic, geography, and French literature, of which I knew but little.

I suggested to grandmother an idea that pleased her—to have M. Tavernier, the master of the school where my father had been professor, give me lessons, as he was particularly clever, it was said, in inspiring his pupils with a love of study.

My father approved all my plans, especially that of having chosen for my professor a man whose merits he had heard praised.

He began by telling me I must copy five pages of Racine every day, and he read to me the first five pages, pointing out to me the beauty of the phrases, the musical sonority of the words. It was curious that my father, with his exaggerated,

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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ardent political opinions, should be purely classical in his literary tastes, having an admiration only for the literature of the ancient Greeks and their imitators.

What admirable lessons I received from him during the few hours he spent at Chauny! We both worked in my pretty, well-ordered room, always full of flowers, whose old furniture he disliked, calling it "trumpery," but where he was happy, all the same.

"Literature is the great consolation," my father said to me; "everything else fails us, that alone remains. At Epidaurus the doctors of ancient times declared that the last traces of an illness did not disappear until the convalescent person had felt his mind enlarge with admiration on listening to the verses of Sophocles and of Euripides."

My father's dearest dream was to travel in Greece. "No one would enjoy it more than I," he said, and added: "Be a Greek, Juliette, if you wish to live a privileged life in the worship of what is eternally beautiful, of that which elevates man above his epoch."

Always deeply distressed about politics, execrating General Cavaignac, who had, he said, more than anyone else, opposed all attempts at conciliation "in order to plant his banner in ground sod-

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## I BEGIN TO STUDY HOUSEKEEPING

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den with blood," my father, alarmed at the progress Bonapartism was making in the country, and who until now had talked to me only of public events, scarcely ever mentioned them any more.

One day, when I asked him the reason for this silence, he said to me: "Since the love of politics is the most grievous of all passions when one is sincere, the most deceptive when one is loyal, the most despairing when one loves justice, leave politics alone. Perhaps better days will be born from our present sufferings. Await them. We, the old, enlisted combatants, cannot leave the field of battle, but why should you enter it?"

The proclamation of Louis Napoleon: "If I am made President, I promise to leave to my successor, at the end of four years, strengthened power, liberty intact, and real progress accomplished"—this shameless lie alone reawakened my political indignation. Grandfather, who read it to us, burst out laughing. The five million votes which had elected Louis Napoleon President of the Republic seemed to me an insane act of the French people. From having heard grandfather say that all Bonapartists made game of Republican riff-raff, I believed it, and was not surprised when he said to us one day:

"My Pretender has sworn to be unfaithful to

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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the democratic Republic, and not to defend the Constitution. The fools believe he has pledged his faith to the contrary! Well! I'll wager my life that Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, simple Prince Louis, a simple Bonaparte, will be, before the expiration of his Presidency, the Emperor Napoleon III."

"Alas! he is right," said my father, who was listening to grandfather, and when talking to me one day later of his sadness, his heart-sickness, reproaching himself for having preached his beloved doctrines so earnestly to me, for having initiated me too young in the disillusion of life, he said: "I implore you, Juliette, banish from your memory this lamentable year. Your youth must not be fed on doubt, your faith in the future must not be shadowed by death. I have weighed men, and I despise and hate them. As to the principles in which I believed, they have received so many blows that I no longer know what I wish or what I do not wish. The Liberals are no sooner in power than they become cynically authoritative. The Republicans have scarcely left the ranks of the governed, to become governors themselves, before a touch of madness seems to enter their minds, and they become Cæsarian. All my beautiful edifice has fallen down, stone by stone. I am crushed be-

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## I BEGIN TO STUDY HOUSEKEEPING

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neath it. If, for a short moment, I knew the joy of building it, its ruin has soon followed. I would not at any price impose upon your young life the pain of living amid its destruction. I will not speak to you again of politics, I will not write to you about them. You must take note only of facts, and feel compassion that each one will be a fresh torture to your father."

My grandmother felt much pity for her son-in-law's sorrows and disillusion. "He exaggerates, but he is sincere," she said, "and he has a heart of gold."

My father's only consolation was to occupy himself a great deal with me. He advised that, as I had not studied primary branches, I should go back to the sources of our literature. He read me numerous passages from Homer in the text, to familiarise me with the admirable sonorities of our "initiative tongue," as he called it. He dictated to me, word by word, entire chapters from the Iliad and from the Odyssey, those which he thought the most beautiful, saying to me that we had years before us, and that he would take charge of my instruction in Greek.

"You shall learn with me the history of that nation in which nature incarnated herself to such a degree that she made it supernatural. Your

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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aunt Sophie will teach you as much Latin as is necessary for a cultivated woman to know. She loves and understands Roman literature, and I do not fear that she will reap for Rome's benefit the admiration I shall have sown in your mind for Athens. At Chauny you will have an exceptionally good professor of literature, who will teach you many things you will never forget, and who will interest your grandmother in your studies, which will take her somewhat away from her novels. All this seems excellent to me, and I do not doubt that, if you desire it, you will succeed in knowing more than all the schoolmates you left behind in your monotonous boarding-school!"





## XXXVIII

### AN EXCITING INCIDENT

**S**OME months of 1849 passed, during which I acquired much serious elementary knowledge; but all my ardour was spent on the study of Grecian, Latin, foreign, and French literature. I identified myself with the characters of certain works, and acted their parts. My grandparents and Blondeau lived happily, occupied with me, interested in all that I did, amused by the superabundance of vitality which I put into everything, and lent themselves to taking part, as they had previously done, in my most fantastic caprices. When a book pleased me, they were obliged to assume the characters of the principal personages of the book, to speak their language, to discuss their acts, and to take part in imaginary conversations which these persons might have held among themselves. I began to write poetry again—perhaps rather better than my first attempts—and poems naturally were my chief delight, those of Homer above all. When I was at Blérancourt, my father would consent to be called Ulysses, and my mother Penelope,



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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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although she sometimes rebelled against the rôle I gave her.

I was Nausicaa. I had a passion for washing, and dabbled in water with delight. My father found me many times before a tub filled with soap-suds, and would address me as "Nausicaa with white arms." He would recite to me the words of the seventh canto of the *Odyssey*:

" 'It seems to me best to implore you by caressing words, keeping afar from you, for fear of irritating your heart; ' " and he would add:

" 'I compare you in height and in presence to Diana, daughter of great Jupiter; but if you are a mortal, inhabiting earth, thrice happy are your father and mother. I am seized with admiration on seeing you. So did I see one day at Delos near Apollo's altar a young sprig of a growing palm-tree! ' "

And he would continue, going from one verse to another, as it pleased him to select them, and I would answer him, for I knew he loved the poems, so many times repeated by heart.

During my visit to him that summer, my father had a great sorrow, in which I took part and from which he suffered so deeply that it touched even my mother's heart. His last hopes were cruelly taken from him.

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## AN EXCITING INCIDENT

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On the 15th of June, he informed me that Ledru-Rollin had, on the 13th, asked the new Assembly, which had just been elected, and whose majority was reactionary, for a bill of indictment against the Prince-President and his Ministers, who were found guilty of having violated the Constitution. Under the false pretext of saving Italian liberty, our intervention had culminated by the entrance of French troops into Rome, re-establishing the Pope.

What overwhelmed my father, and made him despair the most, was not so much the failure of their motion, as the hesitating, ridiculous part played by the last two champions of his opinions—Ledru-Rollin and Victor Considérant—in their attempted appeal to the people with what was called “the affair of the Arts and Trades,” and their rather pitiable flight through the back doors of the school. Were they also worth nothing as heads of the opposition party? Had they no courage?”

In July all the trees of liberty were dug up, and my father, who had accepted the function of Mayor in order to plant one of these trees, resigned his office on the day the tree was thrown down.

He then began to condemn, in equal measure, the monarchists and the reactionary republicans.

He was destined to suffer blow after blow.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Since the insurrection of June, 1848, secret societies had been formed, some of which were to fight against reaction, others to prepare the Empire, as the insurrection of the 10th of December had done, and all these societies kept watch upon one another. The Bonapartists denounced, above all, those called "Marianne."

Perquisitions took place, and were called "domiliary visits." The reactionists affirmed that the object of certain of these societies was to overthrow the Republic, which was only a pretext for hunting down Republicans.

The pleasure I had taken in searching for my grandfather's hiding-places for his money had caused me to remark my father's goings and comings to the garret, which I concluded must arise from his hiding something there. So I determined to find out what it was, and I discovered a hole between two rafters, which held a large package of papers, lists of names, proofs of the organisation of a society, the members of which had taken oath to fight against the tyrants, to answer the first call to insurrection, etc.

One day my mother said to my father: "You should burn the papers of the 'Marianne,' which are so compromising to many persons. Since you do not dare to meet any longer, it would be better

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## AN EXCITING INCIDENT

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to rid yourself of the official reports and the lists, which seem to me dangerous to keep."

"I have thought about it," my father replied, "and I will begin to-morrow to convoke our brothers and friends, two by two, to ask their consent to destroy our archives."

That same evening I made myself a large pocket attached to a string which I could tie around my waist, and which I put on the next morning.

It was time! My father had not gathered together ten of the associated members of the "Marianne" (were there traitors among "the brothers and friends" convoked separately?) before an agent of the Republic, at the head of a commission, came to our house one morning at breakfast-time, and, showing his papers of authority, he began to ransack in my father's writing-desk, aided by two policemen. My father was overwhelmed; my heart seemed turned into stone. I watched our visitors doing their work, concocting the while a plan in my mind. I even helped them by pointing out things in an amiable way, and I went so far as to say, laughingly, to the agent of the Republic:

"What you are doing is not very nice, Monsieur; it might even be called indiscreet."

The agent and his colleagues were amused at my conversation.

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Then I said suddenly to my mother:

“Mamma, will you let me go and tell Blatier (the gardener, who was looking, frightened, through the window) to place some cider to cool, so that you can offer some to these gentlemen? It is so hot!”

My mother made a sign of assent. She had wished a moment before to go into another room, but one of the policemen had stopped her. They allowed me to go out, however. I told Blatier to draw some water from the well, and I went with him, feeling myself followed by the eyes of a policeman, who was looking out of the window. While the gardener drew the water, I went down into the cellar, and came up with some bottles, which I placed in the pail of cold water. Then I dallied over several things, went down in the cellar again, looked for another pail for more bottles, which I brought up, and I then pretended to enter the house slowly. Then I flew with a bound to the garret-door, and with another bound entered it, after having taken off my shoes, so as not to be heard, for the house had but one story. I put the papers in my pocket, slid down the staircase and entered my parents' room tranquilly, where the police were rummaging into everything.

My mother, trembling, gave them the keys of

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## AN EXCITING INCIDENT

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the drawers. My father, seated, did not move. I prepared a tray myself, and went outside to have the water in the pails changed. I soon returned and offered some cold cider to our visitors, who were delighted.

They ransacked the stable, the carriage-house, the cellar, and the garret.

When my father heard them go upstairs, he rose, his face convulsed, and I saw from my mother's expression that she was saying to herself: "The papers must be up there—we are lost!"

I took a glassful of cider and approached my father, always watched by the policeman. He pushed my glass away. I leaned over him as if urging him to drink, and whispered these words to him:

"Don't let your face change. I have the papers!"

I kissed him, which seemed to touch the policeman's heart, and my father clasped me in his arms.

Thanks to me, these men had discovered nothing of any importance.

The agent of the Republic said to me: "Madoiselle, I am glad to announce to you that we have found nothing compromising to your father. It would have been serious for him if we had been

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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obliged to state certain facts which we had been informed existed, for your father's name figures on the list for arrest, and he might have been imprisoned, even exiled. He has the reputation of being a dangerous revolutionist, and, besides, he is accused of making proselytes."

"Thank you, Monsieur," I replied. "You must have a daughter yourself, to act in such fatherly fashion to me."

The agent smiled, but did not answer me. He bowed to my mother and father, and left.

I accompanied him to the door, and I watched "the domiciliary commission" for some minutes; then I bolted the door, locked it, and went into the dining-room, where I found my father prostrated.

"From the expression of your face," said my mother to him, "it is lucky they did not find the papers, which must be in the garret."

My father answered:

"Juliette has them!"

"How did she get them?"

I raised my skirt, and cried, victoriously:

"This is how one can fool those who make perquisitions!"

I told my parents that I had learned the importance of the papers from what my mother had said, and of my fondness for finding hiding-places.

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## AN EXCITING INCIDENT

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My father recovered from his emotion, and felt great indignation.

“Such a republic,” he said one day, soon after the famous visit, “is more odious to me than the monarchy has ever been. May I see before long those who pretend to serve this Republic of lies, and who, really, only try to persecute Republicans, grovel before one and the same tyrant, and all be crushed together under his heel!”







## XXXIX

### AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE

**I** PITIED my father for all he was suffering from the bottom of my heart, but had not, in truth, his own Utopian ideas brought about what he called "the lawless reaction"? Grandmother said to me: "Juliette, how can you expect a country to consent to be guided politically by good people as mad as your father? They make public opinion fly to the extreme opposite of their quixotic ideas." And I agreed with her at last.

During all the latter part of that year and the beginning of the next, I studied very hard, and I recall with pleasure one of my first literary successes. My professor, Monsieur Tavernier, the master of the boys' school situated opposite to our house, in order to create a double emulation among his pupils, proposed for me to compete with them for a prize.

The entire town was talking at that time of a terrible storm that had occurred in April, and had made several victims, and of which the quiet people of Chauny could not yet speak without fright.

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## AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE

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My professor gave the narration of the events of this storm to his pupils and to me as our theme for competition. I had followed and observed every detail of the storm, and had even noted down my observations at the time: the fright of the birds, the trembling of the leaves, the moaning of the trees, shaken by the blast; the terror of the people who passed by, the disturbed heavens, the near or distant sonority of the claps of thunder, the jagged streaks of lightning, the terrible noise of a thunderbolt which I thought had nearly killed me. Thinking the storm over, and stifling with heat, I had sat down in a current of air between two open windows, opposite to each other. The deafening thunderbolt burst and traversed the two windows, throwing me off my chair on to the floor. I described all this with much feeling.

Among the pupils at the school were a good many young men whom I knew, brothers or relatives of my former schoolmates. They were all aware of the cause of my having been sent away from the Milles. André's school, and admired me as a "valiant" young girl, an expression frequently used in my behalf in my family, and with which grandmother always endowed me.

I copied and recopied my composition. I devoted myself to it with such intense interest that it

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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gave me a fever, and I was proclaimed the winner by my rivals themselves. One of them came to bring me the news and to congratulate me. I was about to kiss him, when grandmother made me an imperious sign, so I simply thanked him, with warm gratitude.

“What!” grandmother said to me afterward, “were you going to kiss that boy? Why, look at yourself, you are a young girl; you are no longer a child.”

“But, grandmother, I shall not be fourteen before six months.”

“Everyone takes you for sixteen,” she said.

Grandmother sent my father, my aunts, and my father’s family, copies of my famous composition, which she wrote out herself, keeping the original, which I found twenty years after.

From that moment I thought of nothing but literature, and my imagination became intensely excited.

A chiromancer came to Chauny at that time, and my grandmother greatly desired that he should read my hand. He declared that he distinctly saw “the star of celebrity near Jupiter” in my hand, and he added: “I shall see that hand again some day;” and he did, in fact, recognise it twenty years afterward one day on the Riviera, when it

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## AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE

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was not possible for him to suspect who I was. From that day my grandmother never doubted about my future destiny.

At that time I made my family act the parts of Camoën's *Lusiades*. Each one of us had his or her rôle; and, for more than a year, my grandparents, Blondeau, even my father, who had become "Moushino d'Albuquerque," preserved the character of the heroic personages we had chosen. We intermingled, to our great amusement, fiction with daily life, and laughed heartily when commonplace events compromised the dignity of "Vasco da Gama," whom I represented.

My grandfather, the "giant Adamastor," called his pigeons by reciting a passage of the *Lusiades* to them. We knew the admirable poem literally by heart. And how amusing it was when a cart passing in the street would shake our house, which had become our vessel! What sorrowful reflections we had on the dangers we were running! My *dramatis personæ* revolted against my demands sometimes, especially at table, where we were all gathered together. I would, on such occasions, quiet my rebels by draping my napkin around my body to recall the flag scene. The mixture of our admiration for the poem and the absurdities of our interpretations was so amusing that it was difficult

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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for us to lay aside the *Lusiades* to take up Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, with which I was delighted.

My father, just then, thought of leaving Blérancourt. Grandmother's entreaties and mine prevented him from accomplishing another folly which would have caused him to lose the position he had acquired.

He wished to join the phalanstery at Condé-sur-Vesgres. The deputy, Baudet Dulary, having given a large portion of his fortune to Victor Considérant, to make an experiment of Fourier's doctrines, my father desired to take part in this trial, which later failed lamentably, but to which one of his friends, of whom I have spoken, lent his active aid.

During the spring of 1850 a theatrical troupe came to Chauny. I had never been to the theatre, except to hear the opera of *Charles VI.* at Amiens, at the time of my first railway journey. I had read a great many plays of all kinds, for I devoured books like my grandmother, but I had never seen a play acted in reality.

Blondeau decided that he would take me to see the drama, *Marie Jeanne, ou, La Fille du Peuple*. Grandmother disliked so much to go out that grandfather accompanied Blondeau and me.

The wife of my grandfather's barber, Lafosse,

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## AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE

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who came to shave him every day, and who lived in the Chaussée quarter, was a milliner. Grandmother commissioned Mme. Lafosse to make me a pretty blond lace cap, trimmed with narrow pink ribbon. They wore bonnets when they went to the theatre at Chauny, but a pretty cap was more elegant than a bonnet.

People looked at me a great deal, and grandfather and Blondeau kept whispering together, and I knew they were talking of me, but *Marie-Jeanne* interested me more than my own appearance.

I heard people say several times: "How old is she?"

The young men looked at me more boldly at the theatre than in the street, and I saw they were talking together about me, and I soon knew they were not making fun of my cap with narrow pink ribbons, which I feared they might do before I went to the theatre.

I cried so much over *Marie-Jeanne* that I returned home with my eyelids swollen. Grandmother, who was waiting for me, said I was very silly to have disfigured my eyes in that way. But grandfather and Blondeau calmed her by whispering to her as they had whispered to each other.

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All grandmother's friends, men and women, came to see her during the week following the representation of *Marie-Jeanne*, and told her I had made a "sensation."

Grandmother could not contain her joy, and she committed the error of writing about it to my father, who also came to see her, very angry. The "family drama" assumed tragical proportions on this occasion. My father spoke of his rights, and said it was his place to watch over me and preserve me from my grandmother's follies.

Was it possible that she had sent me to the theatre with a comparative stranger and with grandfather, whose eccentric habits, to speak mildly of them, forbade his assuming the rôle of chaperon? Was it not the most ridiculous absurdity to dress up a child not yet fourteen in a young woman's cap? All the town must pity me and ridicule grandmother, he said, and if she acted in this manner I should never find a husband!

"You are mistaken, my dear Jean-Louis, in this as in everything else," grandmother replied angrily; "for not only has the demand of Juliette's hand in marriage, that was made to me a year ago, been renewed, but just now, before you arrived, I received another."

"You cannot say from whom?"

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Grandmother showed my father a letter, and mentioned a person's name.

"One and one make two," she said.

My father was silent for an instant, and then replied in a vexed tone:

"So you wish to marry Juliette as you were married yourself, and as you married your daughter?"

"No," she answered, cruelly; "I do not wish to make my grandson-in-law's position for him. He must have one himself."

"I shall take Juliette home with me; she belongs to me!" cried my father, in anger.

"I shall keep the child you abandoned, and whom I rescued from the poverty in which you had thrown her!"

"I will send policemen for her!"

"Try it! I will leave you all, and take Juliette off to a foreign country."

Then followed terribly sad days for me. Assailed by letters from my father, who did not come to grandmother's any more; by the visits of my mother, who always found a way of irritating me against my father and my grandmother, my life became insupportable.

I did not see my father for several months. All the family blamed him. During the time I passed



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with my aunts, they, who never had written to him, sent him a letter approving grandmother's actions, and telling him he had no right to influence my mind with his eccentric ideas; that the majority of those who loved me possessed certain rights from the affection they felt for me.

In one of my letters to grandmother I spoke of this letter my aunts had written to my father, and she was deeply grateful to them for it.

Strangely, their intervention calmed her, and she began from that time to speak less bitterly of my father.

By degrees the quarrel was again patched up. I wished to see my father again. I suffered from my separation from him in my heart, and in the development of my mind. Becoming more and more attached to my studies on Greece, I needed a guide, and no one could replace my father. I told my grandmother how much I missed him, how my progress in the study of literature was arrested, and I laughingly added that she was hindering my future career as a writer by her spite.

One day in the autumn grandmother told me that she would permit me to pass Christmas and a part of January at Blérancourt.

My father's sorrow was to be consoled, and mine

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also. I rejoiced at it with all my heart, and it was with transports of joy that we met again. My father evinced so much love for me, he was so tender, so occupied with everything that could please, amuse, or instruct me, that my mother, overcome by one of her outbursts of morbid jealousy, became openly hostile to my father, and continually tortured me.

I was flattered by every one at grandmother's; I was humiliated unceasingly at my mother's. If my father spoke of my intelligence, or my beauty, my mother said I was as stupid as I was ugly.

It seemed to me at that time that I was overestimated in both ways by them, and I began to criticise myself, as I have always since done—not with extreme indulgence nor with determined malice. I am grateful to my mother, after all, for having kept me from acquiring too much self-complacency.

I began my study on Greece again, with delight. My father was not only a professor, he was a poet.

“How can you be such a red republican, with such a love for Marmorean Greece?” I asked him.

“With the Greeks, marble was only the skeleton of architecture and sculpture,” my father replied, “and in Grecian colours red predominates.

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Besides, there is no question of art in republican conceptions, but only of politics. Art is eternal; politics is the science of an impulse toward progress. I may be classical in my taste in art, and worship what is antique. In politics I desire only new things. When the people shall have heard the vivifying good word, they will understand beauty and art as we understand it. They already appreciate them better than the middle class."

I cannot describe how my father spoke of the people; the very word was pronounced by him with fervour, almost religiously.

"Papa," I replied, "I want a white republic, an Athenian republic, with an aristocracy which shall arise from out the masses and which shall be the best portion of those masses. I wish a superior caste, which shall govern, instruct, and enlighten."

"And I wish only the people, nothing but the people, in which we shall be mingled and melted as if in a powerful crucible," said my father. "The mass of the people has sap which is exhausted in us; it has a vitality which we no longer possess. The humble class is not responsible for any of its faults, which no one ever endeavoured to correct usefully and intelligently during its youth. How admirable it is in its natural quali-

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ties, which so many elements strive to mislead! Why are the upper classes so vicious? Why have they not given the people some elementary instruction before they tried to educate them? They would not then have allowed themselves to be speculated with by wicked and ambitious men."

The President, Prince Louis Napoleon, passed reviews; made proselyting journeys; the "Orléans," as they then said, intrigued at Clermont, the Legitimists at Wiesbaden; what remained of the republican form of government suffered assault on all sides.

My father said: "We still have the people with us!" But his conviction disagreed with the proof, constantly made more evident, that the government was eliminating the people by all possible means from taking part in national questions. The patriotic workmen were influenced by those who said they had suffered from the diminished part played by France in Europe under King Louis Philippe, and who did not cease to recall the glorious epoch of Napoleon I.

When I was with my father I was obliged to hear politics spoken of, willingly or not; as I no longer took any personal interest in them, as I looked upon political events with indifference, I did not allow myself to be carried away by them, nor

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did I enter into discussions, and our life might have been peaceful, or nearly so, but for my mother's embittered nature, and my father's frequent outbursts of anger.

The same interminable disputes took place, though differing in character from those between my grandparents. I do not know whether similar disputes occurred in all households at the time of my youth. But I believe people were then more sensitive, more susceptible, more dramatic than they are to-day.

Many years later my life was again mingled with my mother's and father's, and it seemed to me that in the reconciliations following these perpetual disputes there entered a sort of excitement of the senses. To weep, to be angry, to accuse each other, even to hate for a moment, and then to grow calm, to pardon, to be reconciled, to embrace and love each other—this all seemed to be a need in their lives and to animate their existence.

My father could not master his terrible paroxysms of anger; he would be in despair every time after he had given way to them, and then would yield to them again whenever he was irritated.

My mother would provoke these paroxysms by

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cold comments or criticisms, ironical and stinging, such as these, for example:

“Monsieur Lambert’s temper is going to be stormy. We shall not be spared the dancing of the plates and glass at breakfast or dinner.” Or: “The republican gentleman sees things with a bad eye to-day; we shall be in danger,” etc., etc.

As my character so much resembled my father’s, I often felt anger rising within me; but the example of my father, who was naturally so good and so tender, but who when blinded by passion became bad, even cruel, taught me to hold myself in check, and I never, in my long life, have allowed myself to give way to violent temper, except in moments of indignation and strong hatred against wicked people, or against my country’s enemies.

The proverb: “An avaricious father, a prodigal son,” or the contrary, is often used, and there is truth in it; for children, witnessing their parents’ example, take note of their daily actions, which are engraved and imprinted on their young minds, never to be forgotten, and forcing them to criticise and to condemn those dearest to them.

From hearing my father and his numerous “friends and brothers” talk violent, “advanced” politics, as they then expressed it, I had become entirely moderate in my opinions. How many

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plans for "Republican Defense" were formed in my presence! Some men wished to assassinate the Prince-President; others to blow up the Chamber of Deputies; still others to make the people rise up against the traitors.

There came one day to breakfast with my father a very "advanced" republican, who was, moreover, a "Comtist," a name that my father was obliged to explain to me, for it was the first time I had ever heard of Auguste Comte. Our guest was a lawyer of the Court of Appeals at Paris, but lived at Soissons for the time being, taking charge of a series of very important law-suits of a relative. His name was Monsieur Lammessine, and he had the reputation of being a man of talent. His brilliant conversation pleased me, but his scepticism displeased me. He said that right had no other interest than that of being the counterpart of wrong; that morality appeared to him as only forming the counterpoise to immorality. He endeavoured to persuade my father that society must become more corrupted than it was in order that a new growth should spring from it. He was of the type of an Italian of the South, with very sombre eyes, a pallid complexion, lustrous blue-black, curling hair. His grandfather, who came from Sicily, was named de la

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Messine; he had naturalized himself as a Frenchman at the time of the great Revolution and simplified his name.

As usual, I took part in the discussions, and grew excited over them. Monsieur Lamessine did the same, and our joust was amusing. He believed in nothing. I believed in everything. When I would hesitate, my father furnished me with arguments, sometimes contrary to his own ideas; but he wished to see me come off victorious against an unbeliever.

Monsieur Lamessine left us laughing, and said to me:

“Don’t bear me malice, Mademoiselle the fighter.”

I replied:

“My best wishes, Monsieur, that Heaven may shed upon you a little knowledge of what is right and what is beautiful.”







## XL

### THE "FAMILY DRAMA" AGAIN

**M**Y great-grandmother at Chivres, who was very ill in March, thought her end approaching, and wished to see me. Happily, it was only an alarm, and our joy was soon complete at seeing her entirely recovered.

Under the pretext that he was called by business to Condé, Monsieur Lamessine, who lived at Soissons, came to visit my aunts, as my father's friend, while I was staying with them. He was rather badly received, and he saw me in my peasant's costume, which I had improved a little, however, as grandmother would not permit me to be badly dressed, even when away from her.

Attired in gingham, with a printed cotton kerchief, and a Bordeaux cap, I was not uglier in this than in other costumes. Monsieur Lamessine complimented me on my picturesque peasant dress. But the coolness of his reception prevented him from coming again.

Aunt Constance teased me about my suitor, but I grew angry, and told her I had other suitors younger than he, and begged her to leave me alone.

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## THE "FAMILY DRAMA" AGAIN

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Two months later I saw Monsieur Lamessine again at my father's. It was in June, 1851. The republicans were plotting a great deal. The President had just made a speech at Dijon, in which he had said that if his government had not been able to realise all desired ameliorations, it was the fault of the factions.

In Monsieur Lamessine's mind and in my father's this speech contained the threat of a *coup d'état*.

They gathered together some friends in the evening to deliberate; I, of course, was not present at these deliberations. My father only said to me the next morning:

"The moment is serious; but we have a man with us who has the blood of a 'carbonaro' in his veins. He will do something." He meant Monsieur Lamessine.

On the 1st of December M. Lamessine came to plead a cause at Chauny. He brought a letter from my father to my grandmother, to whom he was extremely courteous.

Asked to remain to dinner, he showed himself much less sceptical, and pretended that my arguments and my wishes had produced a great influence on his mind. I did not believe him. I thought this was simply flattery, the motive for which I

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could not explain to myself, but it seemed to me hypocritical. I felt a sort of uneasiness, an inexplicable pain, that evening, and I left the drawing-room early.

The next day grandmother said to me triumphantly:

“Monsieur Lamessine has asked for your hand! He pledges his word to live in Paris in three years’ time. My dream is realised. His aunt has given him a certain sum of money to compensate him for having left the capital, and for protecting her fortune, of which he has already recovered a part; I, also, will give you a dowry; but I will not say how much it will be, on account of your mother and her jealousy. It is agreed that I shall spend every winter with you in Paris.”

I was stunned, bewildered, crazed.

“What? What? You are going to marry me in that way! You have promised my hand to that man, who is double my age? I won’t have him, I won’t have him!”

“Juliette, you are absurd. We shall never find another such opportunity at Chauny, far from all Parisian acquaintances. He is sent to us by Providence. Besides, he is very good-looking. He resembles one of my heroes in Balzac, feature by feature. You shall see.”

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## THE "FAMILY DRAMA" AGAIN

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And she went to get one of her favourite novels, which she knew nearly by heart, and read me several passages from it, which I have always remembered.

I took grandfather and Blondeau to witness the folly of my grandmother's plan. It was useless. It was already too late. Early in the morning she had persuaded them, if not of the happiness I should find in this marriage, at least of the possibility of my living in Paris and "conquering celebrity" there.

My father and mother, who had been sent for, arrived a few days later. My father was in an extraordinary state of excitement. The *coup d'état* which he had foreseen had taken place.

My mother at once declared that she shared grandmother's views regarding my marriage. My father flew into one of his rages. He said, in a loud voice, that he would never consent to the union of his only daughter with "an old man"—that was to say, a husband double the age of his wife. He raved, he overstepped all bounds in his objections, and finally left the drawing-room, swearing at and insulting everybody. He reappeared a few moments later, and, half-opening the door, called me, took me in his arms, after having wrapped me up in a shawl of my mother's, bore

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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me to his carriage, standing outside, and, whipping his horse, carried me off, while my mother and grandmother, screaming in the street, ordered him to leave me.

He was literally mad, and spoke in violent terms against Monsieur Lamessine, telling me things of which I had never heard about the life of "an old bachelor."

However, the evening I passed alone with my father at Blérancourt touched my heart more than I can describe. He depicted the despair of a father who adored his daughter, who had scarcely ever had her to himself, and who was urged to give her, still a child, to an unworthy man. Tears ran down his face. He told me how unhappy he was, and related his whole life to me.

"The more I have loved, the more have I been crushed by what I loved," he said. "At first, crushed in my faith, then in my affection for my wife, my first, my only love, crushed by friendship, deceived by my best friend, Doctor Bernhardt, for whom I abandoned everything, my small means, my happiness, and my child; am I now to be crushed in my affection for my idolised daughter, just at the moment when my love for the Republic and liberty is betrayed?"

Terror had reigned for several days. All the

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heads of the party of liberty were exiled. Twenty-six thousand were sent out of the country; the republican leaders were despatched to Noukahiva; their soldiers could not reassemble.

Scarcely had Louis Napoleon Bonaparte assured the country of the purity of his intentions, in November, before he took possession of France by fraud.

"France has understood," he said at that time, "that I infringed the law only to enter into my rights."

"All is over with the Republic, and through the fault of republicans themselves," my father said, despairingly. "I hate in the same way those who have let themselves be conquered through weakness, and those who have conquered by brutality. And now they wish to sacrifice my daughter to I know not what idiotic dream of future celebrity. Juliette, Juliette, my child!" he cried, "I will protect you. You are my last refuge, my last hope—I cling to you!"

And my father wept like a child. I consoled him almost maternally, and said to him:

"Father, calm yourself; they cannot marry me against my will."

The next morning my mother, who had been left behind, and who never knew how to hide a

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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grievance, arrived, very angry, and had a quarrel with my father, during which never-to-be-forgotten words were said, wicked words, which my parents should never have used to each other before me, for they suggested to me for the first time the desire to escape from so much violence, and from the sight of so many cruel wounds opened under my eyes.

“Nothing more—they have left me nothing more! I have lost everything!” cried my father. “I am a shipwrecked man, struggling amid wreckage. I would like to die! Do not let them take my daughter from me, for pity’s sake!”

“Your daughter cannot remain here,” replied my mother; “her grandmother is waiting for her, for it was she who brought me home; she is at the Decaisne’s. Juliette will now be always tossed about between us; it is she who will be the shipwrecked one. Besides, I do not want her! Her grandmother has taken her, brought her up according to her ideas; let her keep her, marry her, arrange her happiness according to her will; it is not our place to meddle with it. The responsibility of it all remains with you, who forgot your fatherly duty years ago.”

And my mother took me away, vanquished, feeling myself reduced to powerlessness. And I was

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## THE "FAMILY DRAMA" AGAIN

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again wrapped up in the same shawl and returned to Chauny, this time in a closed carriage, for the night was dark and the rain fell in torrents.

My father wrote me a letter, which I had the misfortune to keep, and which later occasioned one of the most sorrowful crises in my life, which had already begun to number a good many.

"My beloved daughter," wrote my father, "do not allow yourself to be doomed to unhappiness. The man whom they wish you to marry is a sceptic; he desires to unite the attraction of your person to his own, to advance him in society, and to better a position to which he aspires. He is not a man to love you, or whom you will ever love. They cannot marry you without my consent, do not forget it. Should I be obliged to lose forever what tranquillity remains to me, on account of this, I will not sacrifice you. If you should let yourself be led astray, and should ask my consent to this marriage, I should only have to add the despair of my private experience to the hopelessness of my public life."

How shall I relate my struggles, which lasted for long months? They can be imagined. My grandmother and my mother desired this marriage for different, but equally selfish motives, which blinded their eyes. The former wished not to lose



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me entirely, Monsieur Lamessine having promised her that she should live with us during the winter, in Paris, so soon as we should be settled there; my mother desired the match in order to remove me from my father.

Poor father! He was often a prey to his wild fits of anger, and threw himself again headlong into politics, making himself conspicuous, compromising himself, thinking only of falling on some enemy, no matter whom it might be, of giving battle, of fighting, and of escaping from his present sufferings by other sufferings.

He succeeded, and his name soon figured at the head of a new list of convicts to be sent from the Aisne department. When they came to arrest him, in 1852, he was so seriously ill in bed that he could not be removed. This delay gave my grandmother time to write to my friend Charles, who, after having left Flocon, to rally himself to Bonapartism, had become an influential man. He succeeded in having my father's name erased from the list of convicts, but implored my grandmother to make him keep quiet, for he would not be able to save him a second time, he wrote, "if his democratic-socialistic follies pointed him out again as dangerous."

Alas! when this letter reached grandmother my

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## THE "FAMILY DRAMA" AGAIN

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father had brain fever, which endangered his life for a week. As soon as my grandfather heard the news of his illness he hurried to Blérancourt, installed himself by his son-in-law's bedside, and by devoted care snatched him from death.

When my father was out of danger my mother and my grandmother dared not refuse the poor convalescent his desire to see me again.

I went, but how sad we both were, and in what suspicion did we feel ourselves held! Grandmother accompanied me there, and neither she nor my mother would leave me alone with my father for a moment.

I said to him, before my two stern guardians: "Dear father, I think it would be better, after all, for me to consent to this marriage, because when I am married I shall be at liberty to ask you to come to me, and to talk with you a little alone, heart to heart."

"No, no!" he replied; "I would rather see you dead than delivered over to certain unhappiness!"

And yet it was he who delivered me over to the unhappiness he foresaw.

In a moment of violent anger, which my mother had finally succeeded in provoking, he signed a paper, which until then she had endeavoured in vain to make him sign.

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I felt myself abandoned even by my aunts, who, at the idea of having me live for three years at Soissons, near to them, and then at Paris, whence I should be glad to come to pass some months in the country, told me that after having seen Monsieur Lamessine again, who had gone several times to make them a visit, they approved of the marriage.

“Besides,” said aunt Constance, with her customary banter, “if you should be unhappy and abandoned, my dear Juliette, Chivres is here to give you asylum. If you should have a numerous family, Roussot alone would become insufficient, and, to compensate you for your husband’s absence, we would buy another donkey!”





## XLI

### MY MARRIAGE AND ITS RESULTS

**I** MARRIED Monsieur Lamessine. My father was not present at my wedding. He confessed to me later that he was so unhappy on that day that he wished to blow out his brains; but he thought, perhaps, I might have need of his protection some day, and he resigned himself to living.

Alas! I ought to have claimed his protection from the very first hours of my marriage, but I felt that if I spoke a word it would be a new anguish for my father, whose fears it would have confirmed; to my grandmother, whose scaffoldings of dreams it would have cast down, and to my dear aunts, whose peace it would have disturbed. I did not say a word until after my confinement, for which I went to Blérancourt, and where I was, so to speak, forced to confidences by my father, who divined all that I must have suffered.

When she knew herself a great-grandmother and that she could embrace her granddaughter's child, my grandmother hoped to extend the agree-

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## MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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ment of living with me every winter at Paris to the house at Soissons, which we were to inhabit for eighteen months longer.

One day, when she had come to see me, to complete the secret dowry, the last installment of which she had engaged herself to pay only so soon as we should be settled in Paris, but which she anticipated, she said to my husband when breakfast was over:

"Do you know why I have brought such a large trunk?"

"Why, no, madame."

"It is because I expect to pass the winter with you and Juliette."

"Impossible, my dear madame."

"What do you mean by impossible?"

"I made a mistake; I meant to say, you will never come."

"Never, do you say?"

"You will never live in my house with your grandchild."

"You are joking, monsieur."

"No, I am speaking most seriously. You think Juliette is happy, she is not; we agree in nothing, nor about anything. If you should be a third party in our household, what would our unhappiness be then?"

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"Is it true, my Juliette, that you are unhappy?" asked my grandmother.

"Yes," I answered, choking with sobs, "I am as unhappy as one can possibly be."

My grandmother rose from her seat suddenly, but she was obliged to lean against a chair to keep from falling. She tottered like a tree that is being uprooted.

"But your promises?" she said to my husband.

"They were necessary, my dear madame," he replied, "only until you had finished keeping yours integrally."

My grandmother opened the dining-room door without saying a word, took her cloak from the hall, and left our house. I went up to my room to put on my bonnet, and followed her. I did not know where to look for her. A man had come to get her trunk, which I saw put on the diligence. I learned later that a lady had taken a place for herself in it; that she had left the village in a carriage and was to take the diligence outside of the town. She had done likewise when she carried me off from Verberie.

I could not leave my daughter, whom I was nursing. I returned, and implored my husband to take the diligence, to rejoin my grandmother, and bring her back to me.

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"Ah! no, indeed!" he said to me; "it has gone off too well! No drama, no quarrel. I am delighted."

I could do nothing but give the driver of the diligence a letter for my poor grandmother, in which I told her all my sorrow. I added: "I am 'tied' in my turn, and I 'browse'; but I shall untie myself as soon as I possibly can."

And so my grandmother's last and dearest romance ended cruelly. On returning to Chauny she starved herself to death. Knowing she had but a few days more to live, she sent for my father and asked him to pardon her for the harm she had done to him and to me, in marrying me against his wishes and mine.

My father forgave her, and implored her to do all that she could to live (alas! had she wished it, there was no longer time!), saying that I had need of all those who loved me, more than ever now.

Knowing I was nursing my child, she had not let me suspect anything about her tragical determination; on the contrary, in each one of her letters she reassured me, saying she did not take my husband's words seriously. I did not even imagine that she was ill.

One night, about ten o'clock, I had just put my daughter in her crib, had returned to bed, and was

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## MY MARRIAGE AND ITS RESULTS

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about to go to sleep, when, by the light of a night lamp that was always burning, I saw my grandmother come into my room.

"Ah! grandmother, is it you?" I cried.

With a slow gesture, she put her hand up to her eyes. The sockets were empty! I jumped out of bed and went toward her—she had disappeared!

I rushed into my husband's study, where he was writing.

"My grandmother, my grandmother, where is she? I have just seen her, with empty eyes, in my room!"

"You are crazy," Monsieur Lamessine said; "your grandmother cannot be here. Your mother writes me that she is ill, and begs me, on account of your nursing, not to inform you of it."

The next day I heard that my grandmother had died at the very hour she had appeared to me.

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When I began to believe in religion again, this apparition of my grandmother was to me one of the strongest proofs of a hereafter.

The movement of her hand carried up to her eyes, whose sockets were empty, seemed to me to signify: "Blindness is death!"

I had remained blind too long, and always in my dreams I saw my grandmother again with the



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frightful gesture of her hand raised to her empty eyes.

I have never seen her again with this gesture since I wrote my *Rêve sur le Divin*, which, with my reborn soul, I dedicated to the newly born soul of my granddaughter, Juliette. It was a book written with deep feeling, the inspiration of which I believe to have come from my beloved grandmother.

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The day after this strange apparition I left for Chauny with my daughter.

My mother, profoundly moved by her mother's death and by the causes which had determined it, received me with tenderness and with tears of repentance. When my grandmother was dying, and when she implored my father's forgiveness, she had exacted from her daughter a promise that she would at the same time ask her husband's pardon for the harm she had done by her jealousy.

I passed some sad but peaceful weeks with my parents. My grandfather obtained my father's and mother's consent to come and live with them.

"It will not be for long," he said to them; "for I can never live without my dear scolder, and you will bury me before this year is over." He died eleven months after my grandmother.

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From the day my grandmother left us, my father's one thought was to replace her in my life, and he bestowed a double affection upon me. He encouraged me to work, aided me with his advice, and said to me:

"When your married life becomes even more intolerable to you than it is now, your mother and I will dedicate our lives to you. We will follow wherever you may lead us. Work, work, and become known. There is no other way by which a woman can gain her liberty than by affirming her personality."

I worked while nursing and bringing up my daughter. I completed my education, very much developed in certain matters, very insufficient in others.

Then, one day, after some insignificant literary attempts, revolted at the insults Proudhon had thrown at Daniel Stern and George Sand in his book, *La Justice dans la Révolution*, I wrote my *Anti-Proudhonian Ideas*, and my real literary life began, with the record of which I shall some day continue these memoirs.



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